



Bergen Community College

Self-Study Report

February 2025

SUBMITTED TO THE MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION



Bergen Community College Middle States Self-Study Report

Submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Dorothy Blakeslee, Board of Trustees Chair
Dr. Eric M. Friedman, President

February 2025

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A Letter from President Eric M. Friedman

Middle States Commission on Higher Education Site Visit Team Members,

It gives me great pride to lead this incredible institution, Bergen Community College. As you will read throughout this Self-Study, in these uncertain times, Bergen represents a consistent beacon of hope for our community, providing transformational learning experiences and changing the trajectory of lives.

Since the College's last affirmation of its accreditation, Bergen has made substantial progress in making Middle States' standards *our* standards. The College has accomplished this goal through collaboration, transparency, and a commitment to continuous improvement at all levels of the institution.

In fact, it remains these actions that have impressed me the most about Bergen and the Self-Study process. The sheer number of people who contributed to this work reflects the dedication we share for this anchor institution.

The state of Bergen is strong. I hope you enjoy reading this Self-Study. It represents a celebration of our accomplishments while we operate through the framework of Middle States' requirements and standards of excellence.

Sincerely,
Dr. Eric M. Friedman
President, Bergen Community College



Executive Summary

Since the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) last affirmed accreditation for Bergen Community College (the College or Bergen) in 2016, the College has purposefully worked on continuously improving services for students and the community it serves. Bergen's commitment to excellence is evidenced by the careful selection and hiring of its eighth president, Dr. Eric M. Friedman, as well as strategic appointments of new Board of Trustees (BOT) members to strengthen governance, oversight, and strategic direction (see Standard VII). President Friedman began his tenure in January 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite unexpected challenges brought on by the pandemic, his steady leadership has been instrumental in helping Bergen, New Jersey's largest community college, to navigate and recover from pandemic-driven uncertainty, and enhance long-term operational viability.

Bergen's mission drives its central focus on academic excellence and delivering value for its diverse student body. Strong and consistent communication, coupled with mutual support between the County of Bergen and the College, bolster efforts to deliver on its core mission and values. The strength of this critical relationship is exemplified by several shared services agreements between the College and the County of Bergen, including shuttle services between campuses, police services to enhance security and safety, grounds maintenance, snow removal, and high school equivalency classes for inmates at Bergen County jails through its Continuing Education Division.

Bergen continues to make progress on ensuring that the *MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation* are reflected in the central tenets of its operational processes. As evidenced in this report, the College infuses assessment and analyses throughout its academic and non-academic operations. For example, the College deployed Linkage Meetings to strengthen connections between departmental/program assessment and resource planning (see Standard III, V, VI). Bergen prioritizes assessment and data-informed decision-making not only as a consequence of *MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation*, but also because they are core components of how the College strategically creates initiatives and provokes actions. Under the leadership of President Friedman, the College launched a new All College Forum (ACF) structure to further strengthen participatory and shared governance by significantly expanding the engagement of students, faculty, staff, and members of the community in decision-making process and policy review (see Standard VII). The ACF includes advisory committees such as Academic Master Plan Outcomes, Budget and Finance, Organizational Development, Facilities, and others. Each of these committees is designed to enhance institutional governance and elicit input from a broad cross-section of stakeholders.

The College has undertaken a thoughtful Self-Study that honestly assesses our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. Consequently, at the end of each chapter of this report, Bergen has outlined institutional strengths and opportunities to set the stage for continued action beyond completion of this self-study. The body of evidence presented in this self-study clearly demonstrates a culture of continuous improvement, and through this report, Bergen demonstrates that it fulfills the Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation as defined by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. At Bergen Community College, Middle States standards are the College's standards.

Standard I: Mission and Goals

Bergen complies with MSCHE Standard I and meets Requirements of Affiliation 7, 8, and 10. The College has a BOT-approved mission statement and related goals that were developed through a participatory process inclusive of a broad cross-section of stakeholders. Through this collaborative effort, Bergen developed a strategic plan for 2024-2029, building on past successes and feedback from stakeholders to address evolving educational and workforce demands. Goals are realistic, reflect student-centric values, and are focused on providing learning opportunities strengthened by robust student support programs and services (see Standards III, VI). Educational and other programs are systematically evaluated (see Standard V), and the College's planning model integrates its mission and goals into its priorities and efforts to enhance student achievement and guide continuous improvement across the institution.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Bergen meets Standard II and Requirement of Affiliation 8, which mandates systematic evaluation of educational and other programs to ensure the institution is achieving its goals. Ethics and integrity are embedded in the College's mission, practices, and policies. The College promotes academic freedom, respect for faculty, staff, and students, and upholds fair hiring practices. Bergen demonstrates its commitment to truth and accuracy in both internal and external communications. The College regularly evaluates academic and non-academic areas to maintain compliance with all regulations and requirements. In support of promoting strong ethics and integrity in our ongoing operations, Bergen demonstrates a strong commitment to regular and accurate dissemination of information to both internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore, the College has a well-defined process for policy review and documentation, with conflict-of-interest language embedded in its policies and procedures. To supplement the policy process, Bergen established a compliance office in 2022 to promote continuous improvement in our processes and activities. These, and other measures, reflect the College's deep commitment to operating with integrity, fostering an environment of respect and belonging for its community, and contributing to a positive and inclusive campus culture.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

Bergen's academic offerings comply with MSCHE Standard 3 and Requirements of Affiliation numbers 8, 9, 10, and 15. The College has a robust selection of programs and courses to meet the needs of students and fulfill its mission as a comprehensive community college. Programs include a well-developed array of student support services to maximize student potential and success. Programs and options are assessed on a regular basis to ensure quality. Full-time and adjunct faculty are qualified and offered professional development opportunities each year. To support the student learning experience, the College offers a comprehensive array of programs and options to meet the needs of our diverse student body. Additionally, the full-time to adjunct faculty ratio remains consistent and proportionate to student enrollment. Student support services include a robust, nationally recognized learning resource center (CLAC) to enhance student academic success. Through resources such as the Judith K. Winn School of Honors, STEM Research Center, and Interdisciplinary Center for Simulation, students are afforded excellent opportunities to excel in their studies beyond a typical community college classroom experience.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Bergen's comprehensive array of services clearly meets the MSCHE Standard IV criteria and Requirements of Affiliation 8 and 10. The College provides extensive support for all students, including those from diverse academic backgrounds, traditional and non-traditional ages, and various cultural backgrounds. A broad spectrum of services reflects the diverse and vibrant student population, ensuring that every student has access to the resources needed for success.



Bergen systematically evaluates its educational programs and other initiatives, communicating to stakeholders how the College accomplishes its goals. This core evaluation strategy is demonstrated through various assessments, surveys and audits conducted across departments, ensuring transparency and accountability. For example, the Center for Institutional Effectiveness conducts annual surveys and monitors core indicators related to student experiences and outcomes. Additionally, the Office of Financial Aid has undergone multiple internal and external audits to enhance compliance and streamline processes, directly improving student access to financial resources.

Institutional planning is deeply integrated into goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement. A Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEM) aligns with the Academic Master Plan and is periodically updated to reflect emerging priorities and needs. The SEM Plan's strategic and data-informed approach has contributed to reversing a decade-long enrollment decline and improving graduation rates.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Bergen meets the requirements of Standard V and Requirements of Affiliation 8 and 10. The Standard V chapter outlines evidence that establishes timelines and defined responsibilities for systematic assessment and program reviews. Departments conduct assessments and reviews with emphasis on improving students' educational experiences. The academic enterprise has a robust plan to review programs (and options) to ensure strong institutional planning, informed resource allocation, regular outcomes assessment, and subsequent curricular adjustments to improve student learning. Bergen demonstrates strong use of assessment and program review to improve student outcomes and supplement resource allocation efforts. Faculty are engaged in the process and planning of curricular assessment to improve educational effectiveness. Bergen is committed to continuously improving its assessment and review process, ensuring that these activities routinely integrate with fiscal planning. Furthermore, the College recognizes and commits to continuing college-wide forums (see Standard VII) to enhance and expand communication on outcomes to stakeholders.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

Bergen complies with Standard VI and meets Requirements of Affiliation 10, 11, and 12. Bergen's core values provide a framework for effective programs and services. Through an ethic of care, students, faculty, staff, and the extended community are well served by the College's sound fiscal management. To meet this challenge, Bergen remains vigilant in prioritizing and executing its mission and strategic plan. Bergen is cognizant that its success relies heavily on planning, using resources effectively, and improving the student experience and operational success. These factors are central to the requirements and underlying core values espoused by Standard VI. The discussions and body of evidence presented in this chapter are indicative of the College's commitment to student success, fiscal stability, and institutional effectiveness.

Bergen employs a budget process that is built in principle on ensuring that programs and services align with its mission, strategic plans, presidential goals, and assessment results. The College's ability to achieve positive results through progressive improvement in fiscal stability and long-term viability points to strong leadership at the County, BOT, and institutional levels. Against the backdrop of national trends in declining enrollment, the College's focus on assessment, sound financial management, and mission-driven prioritization for allocating limited resources bolsters confidence that Bergen is fiscally sustainable and well positioned to continue operations into the future.

Bergen demonstrates a strong commitment to transparency and inclusiveness in its budgeting and financial planning process. This commitment is evident in the establishment of the Finance and Budget Committee under the umbrella of the All College Forum (ACF) (See Standard VII). This committee serves as an advisory body to the President. The College consistently creates a balanced budget each fiscal year notwithstanding national, state, and local financial pressures, and it continues to expand automation of the budget development and submission process to further transparency and simplify the planning process. Linkage Meetings are among the tools used to ensure that academic and non-academic assessments are tied to strategic planning and goals. A five-year budget model assists with looking ahead to aid future financial planning.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

Bergen complies with Standard VII and meets Requirements of Affiliation 12 and 13. The College maintains a well-defined participatory and shared governance structure, as evidenced by the establishment of various committees and bodies that ensure a voice for the entire College community. Policies such as the Code of Ethics, Non-Disclosure Confidentiality Agreement, Oath of Office, and Financial Disclosure Statement underscore the importance of ethical governance and integrity, reinforcing the College's commitment to avoiding conflicts of interest, and upholding high standards of leadership and accountability. The establishment of the ACF has significantly enhanced the College's governance model by centralizing diverse constituencies and broadening participation in decision-making processes. The BOT remains deeply committed to supporting the College's mission, goals, and strategic plan, while also contributing positively to the campus community through active involvement in key initiatives and events. Looking ahead, the College will continue enhancing its participatory and shared governance structure and maintaining a feedback loop that promotes alignment with the ACF, Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association.



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Glossary and List of Abbreviations	
Term	Meaning
3SP	STEM Student Scholars Research Program
A.A. or AA	Associate in Arts
A.A.S. or AAS	Associate in Applied Science
A.F.A. or AFA	Associate in Fine Arts
A.S. or AS	Associate in Science
AAC&U	American Association of Colleges and Universities
ACCT	Association of Community College Trustees
ACE	American Council on Education
ACF	All College Forum
ACRL	Association of College and Research Libraries
ACUE	Association of College and University Educators
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADC	American Dining Creations
AES	Administrative and Educational Support
AFDP	Adjunct Faculty Development Program
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIC	Academic Issues Committee (State)
ALP	American Language Program, see ESL
AMP	Academic Master Plan
AP	Advanced Placement
Assessment Fellows	The Fellows facilitate outcomes assessment work conducted by Bergen faculty and staff in the areas of student learning and administrative and educational support.
ATIXA	Association of Title IX Administrators
Bergen Cares Center	This center offers food, clothing, emergency funds, consideration request assistance (bus pass, books, technology), and rental/utility assistance to students, staff, and faculty.
Bergen Daily	This is a daily announcement of activities, events, and general information sent by Public Relations with versions customized to employee and student audiences.
Bergen Gallery	Gallery Bergen presents exhibitions and performances by BCC students and faculty as well as curated exhibitions that connect with our community, our curriculum, and the important issues of our time.
BICA	Bergen Institute for the Creative Arts
BIT	Behavioral Intervention Team
Board of School Estimate (BOSE)	A group of individuals who are appointed in accordance with New Jersey statutes and are responsible for annually preparing and approving a budget for the College and other county agencies. The board is typically composed of elected Commissioners from the County of Bergen. The BOSE approves the College's annual capital and operating funding from the County of Bergen.
BOT and BoT	Board of Trustees
C.P.A.	Certified Public Accountant
Cabinet	Executive Leadership Team
CART captioning	Communication Access Realtime Translation (live captions)

Term	Meaning
CART Captioning	Communication Access Real-Time Translation. This is word for word captioning provided by the Deaf Services department of the Office of Specialized Services and facilitated by technology.
CAS	Council for the Advancement of Standards
CCSSE	Community College Survey of Student Engagement
CDC	Child Development Center
CE	Continuing Education
Center for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation	This interdisciplinary center fosters awareness of mechanisms of social conflict, political and ethnic violence, and genocide through educational initiatives, exhibitions, and dialogues. Working with local and global communities, the center develops skills in conflict resolution and ethical decision making to promote social justice and global citizenship.
CFI	Composite Financial Index or Indicator
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CIE	Center for Institutional Effectiveness
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CITL	Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning
CLAC	Cerullo Learning Assistance Center
CLEP	College - Level Examination Program
COL	Center for Online Learning
Common Read	This initiative, sponsored by the Equity Council, promotes dialogue and critical inquiry of a shared interdisciplinary reading to explore diversity, equity, inclusion, and intercultural understanding.
Communities of Practice	Interdisciplinary groups convened for General Education assessment to review artifacts.
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSIE	Center for Studies on Inclusive Education
CSS	Center for Student Success
Dean of RIE	Dean of Research and Institutional Effectiveness
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DEIB	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
DSP	Direct Support Professionals
Dual Enrollment	This program provides an opportunity for high school students to earn college credit at their high school during their regular school day through courses taught by pre-approved high school teachers, who are required to meet the College's adjunct faculty requirements. All dual enrollment courses appear on the student's high school and official college transcript.
DWFI	Grade of D, Withdrew, Failed, Incomplete
EAB	Educational Advisory Board (Consulting Firm)
Early College	This program is a partnership with local high schools that allows students to take classes approved to fulfill both high school and college degree requirements.
EBS	English Basic Skills
Ellucian	The college contracts with this information technology solutions company for technology-related solutions and operations support across the institution.
ELOs	Essential Learning Outcomes
ELRC	English Language Resource Center

Term	Meaning
EOF	Educational Opportunity Fund
Equity Council	Grounded in the principle of social justice, the Council is a cross-campus, multiracial/ethnic group formed in 2017 under the auspices of the Vice President for Academic Affairs to address achievement gaps revealed in college data. The Council seeks to ensure that all students receive what they need to be successful through the intentional design of all aspects of the college experience.
ERC	Economic Recovery Committee
ERP System	Enterprise Resource Planning System
ESL	English as a Second Language, see ALP
Extended Cabinet	This group consists of the President's Cabinet (Vice Presidents) plus Assistant Vice Presidents (Safety and Security, Student Affairs, Information Technology, and Financial Aid and Compliance).
Fact Book	Published annually by the CIE, the Fact Book presents data relating to enrollment, graduates, faculty and other personnel, college finances, and demographics.
Faculty Scholarship Release Time	Tenure-track and tenured faculty are eligible for scholarship or research reassigned time for one course or its equivalent per semester. The reassigned time is awarded on a semester-to-semester basis (Fall or Spring only). A Faculty Scholarship Reassigned Time Committee, consisting of the Chairperson of the Faculty Senate (or designee), an Academic Dean, and the co-chairs of Faculty Development, reviews the applications and recommends up to seven faculty proposals, given the number of open slots in the program.
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FAS	Financial Aid Services
FCA	Facility Condition Assessments
FD	Faculty Development Committee
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
Foundation	Bergen Community College Foundation
FSEOG	Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant
GASB	Government Accounting Standards Board
GE or Gen Ed	General Education
GSAC	Garden State Athletic Conference
HESI	Higher Education Scheduling Index
HSI	Hispanic Serving Institution
ILO	Institutional Learning Outcomes
ILR	Institute for Learning in Retirement
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
IRB	Institutional Review Board
IST-123	Interdisciplinary Studies - Success Course
ITS / IT	Information Technology Services
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LAC	Learning Assessment Committee
LC	Learning Communities
LEAP	Liberal Education and America's Promise
Lecturer	Lecturers are limited to no more than four continuous semesters of appointment as Lecturers. Two additional semesters for a total of six continuous semesters may be approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Term	Meaning
Literary Art Series	This is a project designed to encourage intercultural understanding and literacy in the classroom and broader community. An author is selected each year for study on the campus and invited to speak on campus. Pedagogical materials and other curriculum items are prepared and made available to support individual readers and teachers who use the author's work in their classes as a part of varying curricula.
LMS	Learning Management System
Management Team	Upper level administrators that have direct reports, such as deans, directors, managers, and assistant vice presidents. They meet regularly with the President.
MAT	Mathematics course code.
MSCHE	Middle States Commission on Higher Education
MT	Management Team
NISOD	National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development
NJ OSHE	NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education
NJ STARS	New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship Program
NJCAA	National Junior College Athletic Association
NJCCC	New Jersey Council of County Colleges. The NJCCC, created by state statute 18A:64A-26 in 1989, works with the leadership of trustees and presidents to strengthen and support New Jersey's network of community colleges to coordinate responsibilities as required by state law and coordinate lobbying and other statewide efforts to improve student opportunities and student success outcomes.
Non-Academic Unit	Non-academic units, for assessment purposes, are departments that fall outside of the academic and educational support (AES) units.
NSO	New Student Orientation
OMSA	Office of Multicultural Services and Activities
One Stop, One-Stop Center	Located in the Pitkin Education Center at the Paramus campus, this center brings together key services for a streamlined student support experience.
OPRA	Open Public Records Act
OSS	Office of Specialized Services
OTC	Open Textbook Collaborative
PAC	Policy Advisory Council
PACDEI	President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment
PLO	Program Learning Outcomes
PSE&G	Public Service Electric and Gas Company
PTK	Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
RFP	Request for Proposals
RoA	Requirements of Affiliation
ROI	Return on Investment
SAAM	Sexual Assault Awareness Month
SAP	Satisfactory Academic Progress
SEM Plan	Strategic Enrollment Management Plan
SGA	Student Government Association
SI	Supplemental Instruction
SSL	Sidney Silverman Library
SLO	Student Learning Outcome

Term	Meaning
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Math
Stop-out Students	Students who began their degree programs but stopped attending prior to degree completion.
Threads	This is the clothing closet managed by the Bergen Cares Center especially for students in need of professional clothing.
TNG	TNG (Consulting Firm)
TOPP	The Online Professor Program
Turning Point	This is a two-year postsecondary non-degree program for young adults with intellectual disability interested in academic, vocational and social enrichment which includes a career pathway credentialing course. Students earn a Certificate of Achievement through the Division of Continuing Education.
Turnitin	This is specialized software to promote academic integrity, streamline grading and feedback, deter plagiarism, and improve student outcomes.
USDA-NIFA	U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The USDA-NIFA NEXTGEN project is building Bergen's capacity to prepare students for future USDA and regional workforce needs within diverse industries supporting food, agriculture, natural resources, human sciences (FANH), and career clusters.
USDA-NIFA	United States Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture.
VPAA/VPAAP	Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost
VPSA	Vice President of Student Affairs

Bergen Community College (the College or Bergen) is a publicly supported, co-educational, associate degree-granting institution in Bergen County, New Jersey. It was established in 1965 under a charter signed by the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders after two years of exploratory work completed by county residents appointed by the freeholders. After the charter's signing, county officials and the College's first Board of Trustees (BOT) spent the next two years developing a comprehensive plan for the institution, including locating an easily accessible parcel of land in the central part of the county. This work culminated in 1967 with the development of 400 Paramus Road as the College's main campus and the hiring of Dr. Sidney Silverman as the first president.

Now operating as the largest community college in New Jersey, with a main campus in Paramus, and additional locations in Lyndhurst and Hackensack, the College remains committed to the hallmarks of a community college education - quality, access, equity, and affordability - for all who seek learning opportunities across a broad spectrum of disciplines. The institution's mission encapsulates these ideas: "Bergen Community College provides accessible and transformative programs and services to its diverse community. As a comprehensive community college, we are committed to student success, innovation, and inclusivity."

Fully accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), with its accreditation last affirmed in June 2016, the College also maintains specialized accreditations through the: Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs; the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care; the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing; the Commission on Dental Accreditation; the Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology; the New Jersey Radiologic Technology Board of Examiners; the American Bar Association; the American Veterinary Medical Association; and the Committee on Accreditation of Education Programs for the EMS Professions.

The College offers 48 programs, 25 program options and 38 certificates in disciplines such as the health professions, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, the liberal arts, business administration, and criminal justice. Classes take place during the day and in the evenings as well as Saturdays as part of on-campus, hybrid and online modalities.

The College's campuses are home to award-winning facilities like the STEM Student Research Center, the Health Professions Integrated Teaching Center, and the Meadowlands Innovation Center. In 2025, Bergen will also break ground on a new culinary arts center. These facilities address the region's key workforce needs. Other notable construction projects include the redevelopment of the campus quad featuring outdoor classrooms, and the acclaimed renovation of the Student Affairs One-Stop Center at the main campus.

As of fall 2024, Bergen enrolled 11,720 credit students in Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate in Science (A.S.), Associate in Fine Arts (A.F.A.), Associate in Applied Science (A.A.S.), certificate, and certificate of achievement programs. Fifty percent of students were full-time, taking 12 or more credits. Approximately 5,400 students were enrolled in non-credit, English as a Second Language (ESL) or professional courses through the Division of Continuing Education and Workforce Development (CE), the Institute for Learning in Retirement, and the Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center.

The College remains proud of its designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), among its many examples of rich diversity. The 2024 student profile shows 43.5 percent of respondents identified as Hispanic; 25.4 percent White; 8.9 percent Asian; 7.0 percent Black/African American; 0.1 percent Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; and 0.1 percent American Indian/Alaska Native. Additionally, the College serves both traditional and non-traditional aged students: 59.9 percent were 18 to 21 years old; 15.6 percent were 22 to 24 years old; and 24.5 percent were 25 years of age or older. Nearly 54 percent of those enrolled were women. Approximately 40 percent of Bergen's first-year students are first-generation college students. Due to its location, academic programs, and reputation, the College attracts students from over 110 different countries with the largest group of non-U.S. citizens hailing from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Türkiye, Ecuador, and Republic of Korea.



Most Bergen students have English-language reading and writing challenges and place into developmental English. Almost two-thirds of the College's first-year, first-time students take developmental courses (63.7 percent): 49.1 percent place into the lowest mathematics course and 11.9 percent place into the lowest English Basic Skills course (62.2 percent and 56.2 percent of whom are Hispanics/Latinos, respectively).

Bergen serves a growing and diverse set of communities. The College's home county, Bergen County, stretches over 237 square miles in northeastern corner of New Jersey across the Hudson River from New York City. The institution serves the county's 955,732 residents (approximately 10 percent of the total 21-county New Jersey population according to the 2020 U.S. Census). Municipalities with rich resources and cities with declining tax bases, open spaces and cramped quarters, and high- and low-performing school districts all exist within their borders. Still, the county ranks in the top 12 percent of counties nationwide for income mobility.

Socioeconomic factors play an important role in Bergen students' decisions, with 23.5 percent in 2023 saying they work more than 30 hours per week and 20.9 percent providing care to dependents living with them. Thirty-four percent received high need-based financial aid; 51 percent were likely/very likely to leave the College because of lack of finances. Forty-seven percent of all Bergen students receive financial aid, including Pell Grants, FSEOG and Tuition Aid Grants. Additionally, 1,708 students borrowed Subsidized Stafford Loans, and 1,708 students accepted Unsubsidized Stafford Loans. In FY24, the Bergen Community College Foundation awarded \$442,067 in scholarships to over 300 students.

Bergen's alumni have gone on to attend some of the nation's most prestigious universities, including all eight Ivy League institutions. The College also has an award-winning Phi Theta Kappa chapter, which received the Most Distinguished Chapter award in 2019. The College continues to expand its transfer agreements, including recent partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Nature and Scope of This Self-Study

The Process: Bergen has embarked on a comprehensive Self-Study process utilizing a standards-based approach. This model has been chosen due to its capacity to facilitate a thorough evaluation of the College's operations in the context of its internal and external environments, particularly considering the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the development of a new strategic plan. The standards-based approach is intended to provide a structured framework for assessing the College's status, identifying areas for improvement, and aligning future efforts with the goal of enhancing student success.

The Self-Study is organized around the MSCHE standards for accreditation, which are addressed through eight dedicated working groups. Seven of these groups focus specifically on the accreditation standards, while the remaining groups are charged with examining broader institutional effectiveness and student success. Each working group comprises a diverse representation of faculty, staff, administrators, and students, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive review process that reflects the diverse perspectives within the College community.

The Self-Study process began with an open invitation to all members of the College community to participate, sent out in spring 2022. Over 50 volunteers initially expressed interest, leading to a series of interviews to match individuals with the most appropriate working group based on their expertise and interests. To ensure robust leadership, the College President appointed three steering committee chairs (two faculty members and one administrator), to guide the self-study effort. Subsequent targeted recruitment efforts successfully added additional members with specialized knowledge to each working group.

Recognizing the importance of student involvement, the College has actively collaborated with the Student Government Association (SGA) to identify and recruit students to participate in the self-study working groups. This ongoing recruitment ensures sustained student engagement throughout the process, with

student assignments finalized before the first working group meetings in spring 2023. To maintain continuous student participation, recruitment efforts continued into fall 2023 and spring 2024, replacing any students who graduated or stepped down from their roles.

This structured and inclusive approach positioned Bergen to not only meet the accreditation standards but also to foster a culture of continuous improvement that benefits the entire College community.

Expected Outcomes of the Self-Study

Bergen is committed to a fact-based, data-informed approach to continuous improvement as it strives to fulfill its mission and goals. The Self-Study process offers a vital opportunity for the College community to engage in self-reflection and critical analysis of programs and services. Through this process, Bergen aimed to assess how effectively its operating units are advancing the College's mission to deliver accessible and transformative education and services while reinforcing its core values of student success, innovation, and inclusivity.

The Self-Study aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Demonstrate via the *reflective* Self-Study process and narrative, supported by focused, high-quality evidence, that Bergen meets the MSCHE Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation.
2. Demonstrate improvement in the depth and breadth of assessment activity in both academic and non-academic units, year-over-year.
3. Formalize a framework for continued institutional improvement.
4. Strengthen the feedback loop of both internal constituents and external partners to create more opportunities for input and greater transparency as the College moves forward.
5. Adopt the Standards of Accreditation as set forth by MSCHE as the intentional framework for Bergen to continuously improve and utilize *future* evidence-based decision-making in support of its programs and services.

Through these outcomes, Bergen aims to reinforce its dedication to excellence, foster a culture of continuous improvement, and ensure that it remains well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of its students and community it serves.

Important Milestones

Leadership Transition and Strategic Initiatives: In January 2021, Dr. Eric M. Friedman assumed the role of Bergen president amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leading New Jersey's largest community college during such a turbulent time presented both obstacles and opportunities for the College's eighth president. During his tenure, President Friedman has addressed several critical questions that were amplified by the pandemic, focusing on economic recovery, student retention, accessibility, and equity.

Recognizing the need to position the College at the heart of regional economic recovery, President Friedman launched the Economic Recovery Committee (ERC) and the President's Advisory Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (PACDEI) in his first year. The ERC spearheaded efforts such as a county-wide business survey, revealing a high demand for graduates with soft skills like professionalism and communication. In response, the College introduced SizeUp, a County-funded paid internship program that paired student "business support specialists" with local entrepreneurs, supporting over 600 businesses. This initiative earned the 2021-2022 Innovation of the Year Award from the League for Innovation in the Community College.

PACDEI initiated a comprehensive cultural climate survey with responses from 1,199 students, 300 faculty, and 305 staff. The results have been used to develop the College's first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan, aligning with Bergen's commitment to fostering an inclusive community.

Advancements in Workforce Development and Online Learning: Under Dr. Friedman's leadership, Bergen expanded its collaboration with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges' (NJCCC) NJ Pathways Centers



for Workforce Innovation, engaging in four of the 10 critical industries identified, including patient care and cybersecurity. This initiative aligns curricula and credentials with industry needs, providing students with multiple pathways to high-demand fields.

To maintain academic continuity during the pandemic, Bergen rapidly transitioned to remote learning modalities. Faculty were offered comprehensive training programs, including "Teach Your Course Remotely" and the effective teaching practice ACUE course, focusing on online strategies. The establishment of the Center for Online Learning (COL) marked a significant milestone; since the launch, the College has established six fully virtual programs in areas such as psychology and business administration, complete with a full suite of online services.

Institutional Revisions and Strategic Planning: In late spring 2022, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) initiated a review of the College's mission, vision, and values statements. This process solicited extensive input from faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community leaders, culminating in the adoption of revised statements and new institutional goals by the Board of Trustees in January 2023. These revisions provided the groundwork for the new strategic plan set to guide the College's future direction and align with the evolving needs of its community.

Key Highlights and Achievements: Bergen continues to be recognized for its outstanding contributions and achievements:

1. The College was honored by visits from First Lady Dr. Jill Biden and Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona in 2022, recognizing its exemplary student support resources.
2. Over the past decade, 20 Bergen students received the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, valued at \$55,000 annually.
3. The Henry and Edith Cerullo Learning Assistance Center (CLAC) has twice been named "Tutoring Center of the Year" by the National Tutoring Association and the National College Learning Center Association.
4. Bergen's Phi Theta Kappa Alpha Epsilon Phi chapter was named the Most Distinguished Chapter by the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society in 2019 and continues to be ranked among the "Top 100 Chapters" worldwide.
5. STEM students achieved first place in the national Community College Innovation Challenge for their "ScanCan: The Intelligent Recycling Bin" project.
6. Financial analyses demonstrate that Bergen returns \$5.60 to the state economy and \$7.90 to the county economy for every taxpayer's dollar invested.

These milestones underscore Bergen's ongoing commitment to excellence, innovation, and community impact, driving forward its mission to serve the diverse needs of its students and the broader community.



Standard I: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.



Bergen’s mission, vision, values, and institutional goals define its purpose as a higher education institution committed to serving its diverse community. Collaboratively developed and reviewed periodically, these core principles guide the College’s strategic planning, resource allocation, and program development, ensuring alignment with the needs of students, staff, and the broader community. The 2024-2029 Strategic Plan builds on past successes and incorporates feedback from stakeholders to address evolving educational and workforce demands. Initiatives such as dual enrollment, business partnerships, and programs for underrepresented groups, exemplify its commitment to institutional improvement and community impact. Through ongoing assessment, Bergen integrates its mission into daily operations, emphasizing scholarly inquiry, institutional improvement, and student-centered outcomes. In this chapter of the Self-Study, we discuss how our goals are defined, how they align to our mission, and how we integrate assessment to monitor and measure mission/goal achievement.

Criterion I-I. Clearly Defined Mission and Goals

Bergen’s mission, vision, values, and institutional goals (Mission) [1] clearly define its purpose as an institution of higher learning and its commitment to serving the educational needs of its diverse community. Bergen’s six goals are strategically linked to the mission and provide the foundation for the development of all supporting plans and initiatives. Developed through a collaborative process, they stand as the foundation for the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan (Strategic24) [2], 2024 Presidential Goals (Presidential24) [3], and all supporting plans.

With the expiration of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan (Strategic18) [5], work began on the next strategic plan. Reviewing the mission, vision, and values statements and the drafting of institutional goals was a logical first step in the strategic planning process. The comprehensive review of the existing mission, vision and values statements began during the spring of 2022 and continued throughout the fall 2022 semester. Members of the Bergen community (faculty, staff, students, alumni, Bergen County leaders and community members) participated in multiple meetings and discussions, providing valuable input into the development of these updated college-wide declarations. The process included solicitation of feedback from constituencies including the SGA (SGAMiss) [6], Management Team (MTMiss) [7], Faculty Senate (FS102522) [324], and the All College Forum (ACF) (ACF052924) [13]. Surveys were administered by the Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) to give an opportunity for stakeholders to provide specific, detailed feedback and suggestions on the proposed mission, vision, values, and institutional goals (SPsurv23) [438]. A special session was also convened for governmental, community, and industry partners to review the draft statements and offer input (CommuMiss) [8] (InputMiss) [9].

The College’s BOT actively participated in the mission review process, reviewing the recommendations brought forward and offering their input and suggestions for consideration. As a result of this inclusive and iterative process, the BOT formally approved the updated mission, vision, and values statements and institutional goals at its January 10, 2023 meeting (BOT011023) [11].

The College’s mission, vision, values, and institutional goals are published online and are available in print format. They appear throughout the three locations as permanent wall installations, signage in all elevators, on retractable banners, and in all Management Team offices. In addition, the mission statement appears on all newly printed batches of business cards. The mission, vision, values and goals are also found in the College Catalog, annual report, newsletters, and in various other printed materials.

Bergen has long incorporated an intentional mission review process into its strategic planning process. While this is an identified practice that is supported through multiple strategic planning cycles, the Policy Advisory Council (PAC) will be working to draft a policy that codifies this practice in FY2025.

Bergen’s mission and institutional goals support scholarly inquiry and creative activity. The College’s commitment to scholarship and creative enterprise was guided by the 2018-2023 strategic theme “Reimagine Student Experiences” sub goal 3.a. [5 p6], which emphasizes supporting faculty “in the development of high

impact instructional practices that meet the learning needs of a diverse student population.” Scholarship and professional growth are also essential criteria for evaluating faculty appointment, reappointment, tenure, and promotion (FacContract19) [15, Article XIII p33]. Faculty endeavors are supported by several college-wide initiatives, Foundation funding, and external grants. Active grants support student success initiatives, scholarly inquiry, and/or creative activity. The USDA-NIFA NextGen project offers evidence of how faculty from multiple disciplines are working together to build awareness and create career pathways in food industry occupations in the region (NGpr) [439]. The project supports student experiential learning and employer engagement while advancing the scholarly inquiry and creative activity of the faculty championing the grant activities.

Examples of how the mission and goals support scholarly inquiry and creative activity include (SampScho) [440]: Faculty Development Committee Scholars Reception (May 2, 2023), Special Purpose Leave and Sabbatical Leave [15, Article XII p29], STEM Student Research Center and STEMatics grant, BICA (Bergen Institute for the Creative Arts) productions, Gallery Bergen exhibits and visiting artists series, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, Faculty Development Day, Common Read, Center for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation activities, and signature month events.

A network of public and private partnerships provides the connectivity that enables the College to address the educational, economic, and cultural needs of its diverse community (SmBus22). [10]. Evidence of this commitment includes:

- Multiple partnerships with business and industry to provide internships, apprenticeships, and experiential learning opportunities.
- Extensive collaborative programming with Bergen County facilitating shared services, internships, cultural programming, and innovative programs.
- Hosting of the Bergen County Technical High School on the Paramus campus that includes facilitating dual enrollment opportunities for students, dual enrollment partnerships with 53 high schools, and early college opportunities with area districts (FB23) [43 p65].
- Providing a business accelerator at the Meadowlands location and office space for the New Jersey Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.
- Offering a robust non-credit ESL program at the Ciarco Center location.
- Maintaining program advisory committees composed of local business and industry professionals, and active articulation agreements with 48 colleges and universities (HortAC) [441]; (ArtTran) [442].

The College’s commitment to provide credit and non-credit educational opportunities is operationalized through institutional goals 1 and 2. [1]. This is exemplified in the College’s Kids and Teens program (Kids24) [321], CE initiatives such as the Women in Construction and DSP (Direct Support Professionals) programs (DSP) [443]; (WinC) [444] and the Turning Point Program, a two-year postsecondary experience for young adults with intellectual disability (TurnP) [323]. In addition, ILR offers courses to lifelong learners 55 years and older (ILR24) [322].

Institutional goal 6 [1] emphasizes the importance of sharing the College’s success stories. The annual report (Annual) [110], monthly newsletter Inside Bergen Community College (InsideMar24) [42], regular social media posts, and press coverage tell the stories of the life-changing impact Bergen has on its students.

Criterion I-2. Realistic and Appropriate Institutional Goals

The goals are realistic and appropriate for delivering on the promise of the College’s mission to provide high-quality education and support services to its students (InstG) [445]. The New Student Survey (NSSurv) [374] and the Graduate Follow Up Survey (StuGradSGFU) [202] provide valuable information from Bergen students at critical points on their educational journey to inform the College’s goals.

Following the model used to develop several institutional plans, the strategic planning process began with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee identifying themes that were common in all the plans. Through a



process of prioritization, the committee forwarded four strategic themes to the College community through a series of open forums and focus groups beginning in fall 2023. Following numerous presentations and calls for input, the committee reviewed and prioritized the feedback and drafted strategic goals under each of the themes. Once completed, the finalized draft was presented to the College community and BOT for a final review in spring 2024 [2].

The BOT approved the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan [5] on June 5, 2018 (BOT060518) [325]. The Board's Strategic Planning Committee was intimately involved in the development of the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, formally reviewing the proposed plan at its April 18, 2024, meeting (BOTSP24) [446], offering input and completing the comprehensive review process. The BOT formally adopted the Focusing on the Future Strategic Plan at its May 7, 2024 meeting (BOT050724) [326].

The efforts of the Strategic Planning Committee produced a final plan that honors the collective needs of its student body, staff, leadership, and community stakeholders and was informed by the mission and institutional goals. The 2024-2029 Strategic Plan [2] builds upon the previous plan and identifies four strategic themes that will serve as a blueprint for the College's work moving forward. The four strategic themes, supported by 15 specific goals, are: 1) Student Achievement and Enrollment; 2) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belongingness; 3) Marketing, Communication, and Outreach; and 4) Innovation.

The mission and institutional goals, supported by the strategic priorities of the College, guide stakeholders in decision making related to planning, resource allocation, and program and curricular development. Evidence can be found in the Academic Master Plan (AMP) (AcMasterP) [233], Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan (SEMPan) [177], Facilities Master Plan (FacilMP) [235], Technology Master Plan (TechnMP) [236], and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Action Plan (DEI23) [36]. In addition, minutes of the weekly Cabinet meetings capture the discussion and decision-making process on multiple institutional topics, (Cab23) [447] as do the Faculty Senate meeting agendas (FS102224) [448] and support documents and the ACF agendas and minutes (ACF021623) [12], [13].

The president's annual goals [3], as discussed in greater detail in Criterion 3, are reviewed, evaluated, and updated each spring to inform annual planning and align decision-making with the mission and goals. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in support of the strategic plan goals have been developed and will be used to track the College's progress toward the goals as well as aid in the analysis of the effectiveness of each goal in achieving the intended outcome.

Criterion I-3. Goals Focused on Student Learning and Institutional Improvement

The strategic plan goals prioritize experiential learning through engagement with local businesses, governmental agencies, skills training, continuing education, and academic preparation for pursuing higher-level degrees at four-year institutions. The plan acknowledges the hopes and dreams of students and their families who seek to build strong socio-economic bases for current and future generations, and the plan attributes reflect the College's commitment to its institutional mission to inspire the community to realize a better future [5] [2].

Student learning, educational outcomes, and continuous improvement stand as cornerstones to Bergen's institutional goals and are central to its strategic plan [2 p11].

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) survey (CCSSE1112) [449] provides valuable information regarding student academic and support needs. The New Student Survey [374 p10] provides information on the services students are using, and the Graduate Follow Up Survey [202] is used to assess graduate perceptions on how well Bergen's courses prepared them with general education skills as well as prepared them for further study (transfer students) or for employment. This data provides valuable input into the assessment of the goals that support the strategic plan themes.

Each year, the BOT approves the President's annual goals. The President collaborates with the Cabinet on development of these goals, which are shared at the ACF for input and comment [13] and then presented to the BOT for approval. The 2024-2025 goals were adopted by the BOT on June 4, 2024 (BOT060424) [450]. The goals are assessed each year to measure progress and initiate discussions about their alignment with the College's institutional goals and strategic plan. These goals move the institution forward, using agreed upon objectives to reinvigorate the institution as it continues to serve its students and community in keeping with its mission. The College currently utilizes the departmental annual reports to track and evaluate performance toward the stated goals.

The 12 presidential goals for 2024 articulate the expectation to operationalize not only the institutional goals but also the new strategic planning themes and goals [3]. A survey to gauge progress toward the objectives of each presidential goal is under development in the CIE with the intent of administering it twice yearly (fall and spring) and using the results to provide input on whether the goals are fostering continuous improvement.

Criterion I-4. Periodic Assessment of Mission and Goals

Bergen recognizes the importance of reviewing its mission, vision, values, and institutional goals to assess progress toward its objectives, plan for improvements, and share the results with the College community to foster engagement and understanding of outcomes (MVVAssess) [18]; (EbalMiss) [4]. The College values the input of community members, as demonstrated in meetings with stakeholders to review and discuss emerging strategic plan themes as well as to get their input on potential goals that would support each theme. This open dialogue helps ensure that the College is coordinated with the needs of its constituents and the County's workforce needs (SPEX23) [451].

Annual reports (AREX) [452] by each College department/division on progress made on goals tie back to the institutional goals, strategic plan, and presidential goals. Each member of the Cabinet completes an annual unit assessment plan that includes specific goals tied to the strategic plan and the current year's presidential goals. Goal setting charts include baseline data and quarterly goals with due dates. At the conclusion of each academic year, Cabinet members submit a summary of progress made in their areas related to the strategic plan as well as an update on goals set for the year. These documents are then used to inform future goals (SAGoals24) [14].

Standard I Conclusion

Bergen has a Board-approved mission statement and related goals that were developed through a participatory process inclusive of all stakeholder groups. The institution's goals are realistic and focused on providing learning opportunities strengthened by robust student support programs and services. Educational and other programs are systematically evaluated, and the College's planning model integrates assessment of academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement, student learning, and achievement to guide its commitment to continuous improvement.

Institutional Strengths

1. The College has a clearly defined mission, vision, values, and goals that were developed through a collaborative and inclusive process that included internal and external constituencies and were formally approved by the BOT.
2. The College's mission and goals are widely publicized and known, evaluated through the strategic planning process, support scholarly inquiry and creative activity, and guide decision making related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and defining institutional outcomes.
3. The College's goals are realistic, aligned with its mission, and appropriate for a community college.
4. Bergen's goals are aligned with its mission and inform institutional improvement. The goals articulate a clear focus on student learning and achievement and are supported by administrative, educational, and student support programs and services.
5. The College engages in periodic assessment of its mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and achievable.



Institutional Opportunities

1. Bergen should continue its work to formalize its process of reviewing the mission, vision, values, and goals statements as part of the strategic planning process on a five-year cycle.
2. The College should continue its work to refine KPIs for the strategic plan goals to quantify progress, help make decisions and set future goals.



Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.



Bergen, through its policies and practices, demonstrates that ethics and integrity are core to its mission and operations. Bergen is committed to creating an inclusive culture for students, employees, and the wider community. The College has documented policies to address potential conflicts of interest and codes of conduct. Bergen takes pride in its commitment to integrity in internal and external communications, and affordability and accessibility are essential to the College's mission. College policies and procedures are routinely assessed for ethics and integrity and for compliance with institutional goals, strategic objectives, and regulatory mandates.

Criterion II-I: Academic and Intellectual Freedom

Academic Freedom: Bergen demonstrates its commitment to academic freedom through its policies for tenured and non-tenured faculty. Both the Faculty Handbook (FacHan) [19] and the Faculty Association Agreement (FacContract19) [15] define academic freedom as outlined in the *1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* of the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges [19 p5] [15 p54-55]. The Faculty Association Agreement directs non-tenured faculty to file a grievance should they feel that academic freedom concerns affected a decision not to reappoint. The Faculty Senate Constitution (FSConst23) [20] affirms the role of the Faculty Senate, which "participates in decision-making on all academic and student affairs matters related to the operation of the College, including but not limited to...Academic freedom and tenure" [20 p3].

The Employee Code of Professional Conduct (ECofConduct15) [21] was developed, in part, "to protect academic freedom, to preserve the highest standard of teaching and scholarship, to create a collegiate environment for all employees and to advance the mission of the College as an institution of higher learning" [21 p1]. Faculty certify annually that they have read the Code; any reports of a violation are investigated by the Department of Human Resources (HR) or the Office of Public Safety [21 p9]. Adjunct faculty are also subject to the Code. The Vice President of Academic Affairs/Provost (VPAA) reports that academic freedom concerns are "rarely an issue" (TomkoInt021424) [22] and HR indicated that zero academic freedom complaints from employees were filed in the last two years (2022-2024) (GatzkeInt020924) [23].

Intellectual Freedom: Bergen values its students' intellectual life and freedom inside and outside the classroom. The mission statement of the Office of Student Life calls for student-centered programs that celebrate "the open exchange of ideas" (SLMission) [24]. Intellectual life and freedom are reiterated in the policy, Student Organization Guest Speaker Policy, providing guidance for student clubs and organizations and their guest speakers (STU:004-001:2018) [25]. Regarding employees, HR reported zero intellectual freedom complaints filed in the last two years (2022-2024) [23].

Freedom of Expression: The preamble of the SGA Constitution defines its role as one to "enhance the growth of intellect and individualism, ensure and uphold justice, and secure the liberties of our fellow students" (SGAConst) [26]. In addition, the College Catalog has language related to demonstrations on campus that "encourage freedom in the expression of ideas presented in a scholarly and law-abiding manner." (PSCatDemo) [327]. The Management Team has received training from College legal counsel on the Open Public Records Act and First Amendment rights (MT121423) [328]. HR and the Office of Student Life reported zero complaints of freedom of expression had been filed in 2022-2024 [23].

Intellectual Property Rights: Bergen's policies reinforce intellectual property rights for both faculty and students. Faculty are advised of copyright and fair use regulations for their course materials in the Faculty Handbook [19 p9-12], including specific definitions and examples. These matters are also addressed at workshops held by CITL. The Faculty Association Agreement, in its statement on "Copyright and Ownership" in Article XX, Section IV, delineates the intellectual property guidelines for online and hybrid course content [15 p68-72]. The Adjunct Bargaining Agreement (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2022) also addresses copyright and ownership for online and hybrid courses (AdjContract19) [65].

Student guidelines regarding intellectual property violations, including copyright infringement, academic dishonesty, and plagiarism, are addressed in the Student Code of Conduct (SCofConduct16) [27 p8,10], as well as in the College catalog (Catalog23) [28 p217-218, 445-446]. Students are introduced to plagiarism guidelines in course syllabi, such as in IST-123, the College success course (IST123Sy) [29]. Infractions of the Student Code are investigated by the Office of Student Conduct [28 p442-446]. Specialized software, Maxient, is used to channel and track any reports of violations (Maxient) [30]. If warranted, a Community Standards Review Board convenes a hearing panel of three to five members composed of student(s) and faculty/staff [28 p442-446]. Guidelines for student participation in this board are outlined in the SGA Bylaws (SGABylaws) [31 IV, section 2-1-e].

Bergen's Sidney Silverman Library (SSL) observes the copyright policy citing Title 17 of the United States Code on its website, with statements of responsibility likewise posted in proximity to on-site photocopiers and scanners (SSLCopyright) [32]. A "Terms of Use" notification prohibiting the uploading of software or material protected by intellectual property laws is on the website (BCCCopyright) [33]. HR reported zero intellectual property rights or copyright complaints from employees filed in 2022-2024 [23].

Criterion II-2: Climate of Respect

The College has twice been recognized by the publication *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* and the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) as a "Most Promising Place to Work" (Diverse24) [34].

Policies and Actions that Support Equity and Diversity: The foundation of Bergen's policies is the mission, vision, values, and goals statements (Mission) [1]. The mission underscores a commitment to "student success, innovation, and inclusivity." The first institutional goal recognizes the "needs of a diverse college population by creating a welcoming campus environment where all members of the community are valued. The College adheres to the principles of access, equity, and inclusion" [1]. These statements are prominently published on the website and throughout campus. Additionally, the equity statement recognizes and addresses structural inequities and enhances the tone of inclusivity (Equity) [35]. The 2024-2029 Strategic Plan features "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belongingness" as a theme, further demonstrating the College's commitment to these principles (Strategic24) [2].

PACDEI was established with the goal of fostering an inclusive climate on campus and developing the College's first DEI action plan (DEI23) [36] supported by analysis of an inaugural Campus Climate Survey (ClimateS23) [37]. Results of the survey indicated that students perceive a higher level of tolerance on campus compared to the surrounding community. While the many positive responses indicating satisfaction and belonging at Bergen are celebrated, there remains a need to continue the work of educating the College community and creating an environment of inclusivity and belongingness for everyone. In February 2023, the College created the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and in April 2024, the position of Dean of Multicultural Services and Activities was formally created (BOTDean040924) [38]. The College holds regular campus-wide town hall meetings and the ACF as opportunities for cross-campus dialogue and free exchange of ideas.

The PAC, launched in 2017, is chaired by the Vice President of External Affairs (VPEA) (PAC) [39]. With representation across employee groups, including faculty, students, and staff, the PAC is charged with advising the president on college-wide policy development. The PAC provides a platform for transparency in policy review and recommendations. Recent examples reflect institutional DEI and campus climate goals, such as the gender-inclusive restroom policy and the policy regarding weapons on campus (GADM009-001.2024) [40] (GAD010-002.20240) [41].

Learning about the Community to Drive Decisions: To learn about the Bergen community and support decision-making, data is collected regarding demographics, enrollment, graduates, faculty and other personnel, and college finances and then shared within the College and external community. Institutional demographics and curriculum are systematically assessed. Institution-wide assessment results are disclosed



to the College community and the public via the Bergen website. Additionally, data is shared in the College newsletter (InsideMar24) [42]. The College’s student and faculty data are provided in a Fact Book, which reports student and faculty demographics (FB23) [43]. Demographics have also been reported in the Institutional Profile (InstProfile22) [44]. Institutional surveys provide valuable information to assess the campus community, such as the aforementioned Campus Climate Survey whose outcomes were published in a report posted on the internal portal [37]. The CCSSE survey was administered in spring 2024 (CCSSE24) [45] and results were presented to multiple stakeholder groups.

Creating Learning Opportunities for the Community: The College offers extensive training and learning opportunities, both mandatory and optional, aimed at fostering respect within the community. The Institute for Multicultural Learning “creates educational programs that promote diversity, inclusivity, and social change” (IML) [48]. The Center for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation “fosters awareness of mechanisms of social conflict, political and ethnic violence, and genocide through educational initiatives, exhibitions, and dialogues” (CPJR) [49]. The Women’s Advisory Committee was founded “to advance a culture of gender equity and inclusivity” (WAC) [50]. The PACDEI is testing a microaggression awareness training module that will be implemented in the future for all employees (DEIMicro) [55]. The Equity Council Race Dialogue Initiative provided students with opportunities to engage in leadership roles that promote equity (ECRaceD) [420]. Similarly, the Office of Multicultural Services and Activities Student Leader Peer Support program involved student leaders offering support to students with disabilities in the Center for Adult Transition, helping them navigate college life (FYACAT) [421].

Division leaders ensure that their staff are provided with cultural awareness and sensitivity training (SavietInt022524) [51]. According to the Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA), “staff and administrators are trained through multiple divisional meetings and Management Team meetings on service standards, microaggressions, de-escalation, DEI best practices, and more” (TrumpInt020824) [47]. The Management Team were trained on identifying and addressing microaggressions (MT092123) [329].

Through Faculty Development (FD) and CITL programs, faculty and staff have many opportunities to learn strategies for creating learning environments that support diversity, equity, inclusion, and belongingness (FD22) [52] (FD23) [53] (CITLWor) [162]. For example, many faculty have taken the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Effective Teaching Practices course, which has modules on DEI. Faculty and staff have taken shorter ACUE courses such as “Fostering a Culture of Belonging” (Belong) [54].

The Office of Student Life and Development, with the Violence Intervention Prevention (VIP) Center, organizes a variety of activities to raise awareness, including Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) events, Title IX workshops, domestic violence workshops, and human trafficking workshops (SAAM) [330], (VIP22) [331]. Students are introduced to college policies, support services, and educational programs on respect and safety during new student orientation.

Criterion II-3: Fair and Impartial Grievance Policies and Procedures

Students: The College has established thorough, well-documented, and accessible procedures to manage student grievances. These processes involve informal resolution efforts, formal complaint filings, and appeals, all of which guarantee due process for students. Grievances are managed impartially, with responses delivered within designated timeframes to ensure swift and fair outcomes. Additionally, confidentiality and non-retaliation policies safeguard students throughout the process, promoting fairness and equity at all stages. The Student Complaint Reporting Policy addresses complaints including those “regarding College policies, procedures, services, office, and staff/faculty behavior and discrimination on the basis of marital status, race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, disability and veteran status” (StudentCRP) [59]. The process is initiated by the filing of an online Student Complaint Reporting Form (StudentCRF) [60]. In 2022-2024, students filed 71 complaints regarding student affairs and academic affairs and two Title IX complaints (StuComplaint) [469]. Students filed 153 complaints in the five-year period from 2019-2024 (FenkartTIX) [61]. Students are given contact information to file external complaints with

accrediting bodies, state and federal agencies, as well as information about the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (NJTIX) [62]. Documentation of the process is in the College Catalog [28 p224-225] and on the website (GradeChange) [63]. The Academic Affairs Complaint and Grade Appeal Request Form is available on the website (GradeCForm) [64]. These processes are communicated during orientation, new student welcome week, and at many workshops throughout the semester.

Faculty and Staff: Informal complaint and formal grievance procedures are delineated in the contracts of each bargaining unit. Each process contains progressive steps with opportunities for appeal and timelines to ensure timely and equitable resolutions. Grievance procedures are set forth in the Faculty Association Agreement [15 Article XVII, p56-59]; the Adjunct Bargaining Agreement [65 Article VII, p8-9]; Administrators' Association Agreement (AdmContract14) [66 Article XVI, p14-16]; Professional Staff Association Agreement (PStaffContract15) [67 Article XXX, p20-22] and the Support Staff Association Agreement (SStaffContract15) [68 Article XXVII, p28-30]. To give evidence of the College's efforts to address any complaints, the following have been reported (2022-2024) [23]:

Table 1. Code of Conduct Employee Complaints and Average Resolution Time, FY 2022 through FY 2024

Area of Concern	Number of Complaints Filed by Employees	Average Resolution Time
Academic and Intellectual Freedom	0	N/A
Freedom of Expression	0	N/A
Intellectual Property Rights	0	N/A
Copyright	0	N/A
Title IX	1	Less than 2 weeks
Section 504 or ADA	0	N/A
Grievances	2	2 weeks
Complaints	25	1 ½ months

College-wide: Internal complaint processes and procedures for both students and employees are outlined in BOT policy (#HR:002-001:2018) [69]. Title IX complaint resolution procedures are also addressed in BOT policy (#HR:008-001:2023) [70]. Options for reporting are delineated, as well as the informal and formal resolution procedures, including the timeline for both investigations and hearings, sanctions, and the appeals process. Student Life reported two Title IX cases over the past two years (2022-2024), with an average time to resolution of 53 days [61]. The grievance procedure for any alleged violations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), including how to file and the timeline for resolution, is available on the website via the Office of Specialized Services (OSS) (OSSGrieve) [71].

Criterion II-4: Avoidance of Conflict of Interest

College Policies are in Place to Safeguard against Conflicts of Interest: Avoiding conflicts of interest, or the appearance of such conflict, is an important and ongoing priority at Bergen. Policies are in place to avoid improprieties in all College activities, emphasizing hiring and fiscal practices. Through the director of college compliance, Bergen has processes to scrutinize and evaluate internal and external activities at all levels of its community for compliance regularly, supported by College policies and procedures (Compliance) [72] (ScardinalInt031524) [73].

Board of Trustees: The BOT is made aware of policies related to conflicts of interest through their bylaws (BOTBylaws) [74], oath of office (BOTOath) [75], Code of Ethics for College Trustees (BOTEth) [76] and Financial Disclosure Statement (BOTFin) [77]. Trustees are asked to recuse themselves from voting on items for which they may have a conflict of interest [74,75,76,77] (Recus) [78 p4], and they must state which vendors may present a conflict or appearance of a conflict [77]. Trustees sign a non-disclosure and

confidentiality agreement that outlines conditions for dismissal from the Board in situations of non-compliance (BOTND) [80]. The president is required to submit to the Board the names and addresses of any family members with a relationship with the College (PresContract20) [81 p29] (PresContract22) [82 p23].

Executive Team: The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has the responsibility to report and make available to the public on an annual basis a financial statement for the College (FIN007-002:2020) [83]. Other Cabinet members report that they make efforts to reduce or eliminate the potential for conflicts of interest in areas such as investigation of Code of Conduct infractions [47]; Title IX investigations and grievances [23]; purchasing (Hookelnt030824) [84]; prohibiting gifts from vendors [51]; and conducting research (McKoyInt0224) [85]. Many of the Cabinet members reported that guidance for ethics and conflicts of interest policies and procedures is derived from internal College documents (i.e., Employee Code of Conduct) as well as standards from professional organizations, such as the Association for Institutional Research's Code of Ethics, affiliated with their areas of specialization. State law also directs College efforts. The PAC reviews documents at "multiple points" with assistance from legal counsel and revisions are presented at various private and public forums to help catch and resolve potential conflicts (Wetzellnt021624) [86].

Institutional Review Board: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) upholds the commitment to ethics and integrity in research involving human subjects (IRB) [87]. The Dean of RIE collaborates with internal staff and with faculty researchers across the College to underscore the need for ethical research that avoids conflicts of interest. Specialized training is offered to IRB members and CIE staff to build awareness of this critical topic [87].

Employees: Employees are introduced to policies during the hiring process and are reminded of selected policies annually as part of mandatory training conducted via the SafeColleges system. Documents that address conflicts of interest include the: Employee Code of Professional Conduct [21 p4-5]; HR 001-004.2023 - Title IX Policy and Procedures Covering Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct [70 p13,15]; HR 003-001.2018 - Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment (HR003-002:2018) [88 p6]; HR 008-001.2023 - Nepotism and Personal Relationships (HR009-002:2023) [89 p1,4,6] and the related documents Declaration of Familial Relationships and Nepotism Waiver (Nepotism) [90]; Employee Assignment to Position Under Supervision or Control of Family Member Form (SupFamily) [91]; Disclosure of Family Member on Applications for Employment (EmpFamily) [92]. The Faculty Handbook [19] addresses conflicts of interest in two areas: Code of Professional Ethics [p9] and Outside Employment [p14].

Students: All students are assured that financial support for student clubs and organizations is "devoid of conflict-of-interest" [28 p449]. HR has a procedure for addressing potential conflict of interest regarding employed relatives of student employees (StuSupManual) [93 p3]. Alternate work placements are typically found.

Vendors: Vendors and outside contractors have an obligation to report on potential conflicts of interest through numerous forms (VenCon) [79]. State purchasing laws address potential conflicts of interests and ensure integrity throughout the process.

Criterion II-5: Fair and Impartial Employment Practices

Hiring: To further diversify its candidate pools, the College, through its DEI Action Plan [36], has expanded its recruitment sources. New application intake procedures were implemented by HR in 2022. Student workers apply through Handshake (Handshake) [94]. Prospective staff and faculty apply through ADP Workforce Now that has helped recordkeeping, reporting, and tracking of applicants through the hiring process. The jobseeker splash page for employment opportunities includes a statement on the College's commitment to creating a diverse and equitable working environment and its Equal Opportunity Employer status (ADPWN) [95]. Since 2022, a more concerted effort has been made to share internal postings via email with all employees (IJPost) [96], (IJPostE) [97]. Search committees are responsible for running fair and impartial resume screenings and interviews. Search committee chairs document decisions, and HR reviews the logs for any potential problems and compliance.

New employees are oriented to College policies and procedures. Documents such as the Employee Code of Professional Conduct [21]; the appropriate Handbook (Faculty [19], Adjunct (AdjHan) [98], etc.); the applicable Contract (Support Staff [68], Adjunct Association [65], Faculty Association [15], Professional Association [67]); and other available online forms and policies are shared. Specific populations have specialized guiding documents, such as the Tenure Handbook (TenHan) [99] for tenure-track faculty or the Adjunct Faculty Hiring Checklist and Authorization Form (AdjHA) [100] or the Financial Disclosure Statement [77] for selecting identified employees. In 2023, the College developed a nepotism policy [89] to foster fair and impartial hiring and working conditions for relatives employed at the College.

Evaluation: Many of the documents shared at the hiring stage outline expected evaluation events, such as the tenure process for new faculty [99, p15]. Tenured faculty continue to report on their professional development through the annual Tenured Record of Activities (TRA) [101]. Teaching faculty are evaluated through classroom observations by colleagues and through student evaluations (AdjObs) [102], (ClaEval) [103]. All non-faculty full-time staff have annual performance evaluations. In 2023, HR used assessment results to evaluate and enhance the performance review system for full-time staff, moving them to ADP Workforce Now software (HRPerfor) [152]. Salary increases are not based on employee evaluations, and are instead determined through negotiated contracts with bargaining units for unionized employees. For non-union, confidential employees, increases are approved by the BOT per recommendations from the President.

For student employees, there are guidelines in the "Student On-Campus Employment Supervisor Manual" which includes evaluation forms and a recommended timeline, such as one month after hire and at the end of each term [93]. Evaluation of the administration, including the College President, is discussed further in Standard VII.

Promotion: Faculty receive annual communications about deadlines for promotion. Details of the promotion process and requirements are outlined in the Faculty Association Agreement [15 p40] and faculty development offers workshops on completing the promotion application. Information on college-wide sabbaticals is discussed in the Faculty Association Agreement [15 Article XII p31-32]. Department and division promotion committees evaluate a candidate and make recommendations to the dean for faculty promotion. Final approval must come from the BOT. The number of promotions varies from year to year.

Support staff and professional staff unit members are eligible for merit awards. This promotional program is outlined in their respective agreements [68 Article XVI p11] [67 Article XXXI]. The BOT must approve any merit award. HR does not have additional documented procedures regarding staff promotions and merit awards [23]. To promote transparency of the promotion process, HR introduced performance review workshops in 2024 for staff to learn about the review process (PerRT) [104].

Discipline: Violations of the Employee Code of Professional Conduct, College rules or regulations, or poor performance may lead to disciplinary action including "removal, suspension, demotion, or other appropriate disciplinary action by the College Board of Trustees" [21 p10]. Discipline processes are guided by collective bargaining agreements and are progressive in nature except in extreme cases. Guidance for part-time employee discipline is prescribed in the Part-Time Employee Supervisor's Handbook, including oral and written warnings and the inclusion of HR (PTEmpSup) [105 p5]. Discipline for student employees mirrors the guidelines for part-time employees [93 p8].

Separation: Separation events are addressed in the key documents shared at the time of hire, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Documentation for separation events by bargaining unit/employee group

Employee Group	Document
Faculty	Faculty Association Contract [19] Article XIII, Section 5, p36-37 (Termination of Appointments, Tenured and Non-Tenured; Severance; Layoff)
Support Staff	Support Staff Contract [68] Article XVII (Termination)Article XXX (Reduction of Staff, Severance, and Recall)
Professional Staff	Professional Staff Contract [67]Article XVI (Resignation) Article XVII (Termination)Article XVIII (Severance Allowance)
Confidential Staff	Confidential Staff - Benefits Summary (CoSBenS) [107] Article XI (Resignation/Termination)Article XII (Severance)
Executive Staff	Executive Staff - Benefits Summary (ExSBenS)[106] Article XI (Resignation/Termination)Article XII (Severance)

Exit interviews are conducted by HR, giving departing employees a chance to communicate about their Bergen experience. By making this information transparent at the time of hire, employees can have clear expectations about the procedure of separation. This transparency helps to encourage a fair and impartial process. Guidance for supervisors of part-time employees on resignation, termination, and non-renewal conditions is found in the Part-Time Employees Supervisor Handbook [105 p6].

Criterion II-6: Honesty and Truthfulness in Internal and External Communication

Internal and External Announcements: Communication is one of Bergen’s seven core values [1]. As such, there is a strong commitment to regular, accurate, and truthful dissemination of information. The Executive Director of Public Relations (EDPR) coordinates the various publications shared with internal and external constituents and the public at large. Bergen supports multiple platforms of communication, from traditional print newsletters to the ever-expanding platforms on social media. The Office of Public Relations and Marketing (PR) publishes the Bergen Daily, a daily email update with events and information, in two customized editions—one for students and one for faculty and staff. *Inside Bergen Community College* is a periodic printed newsletter (currently issued nine times each year) highlighting programs and celebrating achievements from within Bergen’s community (celebration remains another core value). Studio Bergen Remix gives five-minute updates and is hosted on YouTube (StuBer) [108], while companion Inside Studio Bergen is delivered via email. Bergen’s social media footprint includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, Flickr, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Meetup.com. PR uses Hootsuite to coordinate these efforts. Additional forms of communication include campus monitor slides (shown on closed-circuit television on campus), traditional advertising (including bus, billboard, and newspapers), event posters and postcards, and specialized departmental newsletters. There is regular reporting, such as the Public Safety Annual Security Report (Security) [109]; the Fact Book [43] (with enrollment demographics); the College’s annual report (Annual) [110]; and the Annual Institutional Profile Report [44] from the CIE, which are often announced via email and posted on the College website. Messaging is vetted by multiple stakeholders through internal PR processes before being sent out for consumption.

Website: The College website is overseen by PR, but there is a team of content managers throughout the College who make edits that are then reviewed by PR prior to posting (WebEditors) [111]. The internal student and faculty/staff portals were updated in 2024. A website redesign launched in 2024 aims to streamline communication channels and to improve accessibility to information with a goal of increasing engagement, especially for students [86].

In-Person Communications: Bergen regularly and consistently holds in-person events to convey college-wide information. Formats of the events include town hall meetings, Senate meetings, the ACF and professional development programming. Meeting minutes for shared governance committees are completed, vetted, and approved by the appropriate committee. In addition, the town hall and ACF are streamed and recorded for the benefit of faculty and staff working at off-campus locations.

Prospective and Matriculating Student Communications: Matriculating and potential students benefit from new student orientations, resource fairs, and open house event promotions (OpenHMat) [112]; (Recruit) [113]. Separate consideration and planning are utilized to reach virtual learners [47]. All statistics in marketing and recruitment materials and communications are vetted through the CIE. All applicants receive an email that links them to a student consumer information webpage. Important and regulatory information is regularly updated there and provides a one-stop environment for all College statistics that may be important to a prospective student. These statistics and reports meet internal and external compliance standards. Recruitment and admissions marketing materials and information is “reviewed at a minimum of each year and all documents and materials go through External Affairs and approval processes of PR.” [47]. The registration office updated the course code prefixes to give students a better understanding of course modalities at the time of registration (CCPre) [116] as well.

Additional procedures ensure that the College’s degree and certificate programs, course credits, pre-requisites, and program details are communicated honestly and truthfully both internally and externally. The College Catalog [28 p231-255] and the College website convey necessary information on admissions, services, and policies (WebAdmit) [114]. Recent changes (2023) to the online catalog were implemented, in part, to facilitate connecting degree programs offered with career pathways. This information provides prospective and current students with data on local employment trends and after-graduation expected salaries for designated degrees [28 p105-106]. Access to this data is provided by Modern Campus Pathways, utilizing data compiled by Lightcast. First-time students are given additional support and communications to aid in their transition to college during orientation and in IST courses (FirstStu) [115]. Course prerequisites are listed alongside course descriptions in the College Catalog and on the College’s website. Curriculum sequences for all programs are also available both online and in the catalog. Programs can only be advertised or included in the catalog after undergoing internal and external approval processes. All courses and programs move through a shared governance review process and programs undergo additional external review through the Academic Issues Committee (AIC), a committee of the New Jersey Presidents’ Council.

Policy Announcements and Sharing: With the goal of continuous improvement, the College is improving documentation and the policy creation, deletion, and review processes. As a result, Bergen created the PAC. To enhance communication of the policies, a policies page on the College website (ColPol) [118] acts as an index to reviewed and revised policies [39].

Media Communications: To have a central and consistent voice, the EDPR serves as the principal spokesperson to local, state, and national media and works alongside the VPEA to lead crisis communications and related activities. All media requests are channeled through that office, to assure that accurate information is shared. “[A]s the College’s official communicators, the department maintains a commitment to honesty in reporting and messaging. Whenever appropriate, the department cites sources, verifies the accuracy of direct quotations, and leverages data from the Center for Institutional Effectiveness” [86]. An official style guide, revised annually, ensures consistency and accuracy as it outlines best practices and directs the College community on how to communicate about Bergen and how to utilize PR to communicate with its internal and external constituents (StyleG) [119]. Individuals communicating on social media should consult the specialized Social Media Influencer Policy and Guidelines (SMInfluencer) [120].



Criterion II-7: Affordability and Accessibility

As an open enrollment institution, Bergen enrolls a diverse student population. That diversity is measured through many aspects, including metrics such as economics and ability. Bergen's mission clearly emphasizes its priority to be accessible. Additionally, the College's institutional goals outline its commitment to meeting student needs across this spectrum. [1].

Accessibility: One of the most visible offices devoted to accessibility is OSS. Through a combination of approaches, staff work with students and faculty to educate the community about available accommodations services and universal design principles (OSS)[121] (AccomF)[122]. Students are supported with both personal and academic counseling. Additional information regarding OSS can be found in the chapter on Standard IV. Physical access is monitored with Facility Condition Assessments (FCA) and through other audits. A review of the restroom facilities and water fountains looked for ADA compliance concerns. Furniture purchases and placement are informed by the needs of all community members. As some of Bergen's structures age, "we continuously improve and prioritize work to bring all areas up to code and best practices to serve the entire Bergen community" [51]. Bergen's facilities staff coordinates with OSS to make appropriate and informed updates and conversions.

Course scheduling is another component of access. Bergen's diverse student body takes advantage of day, night and weekend courses offered in hybrid, online, and in-person modalities. Flexible semester start dates give students more opportunities to complete their programs. A scheduling task force was formed to develop block schedule options (ACF0424)[124].

Bergen's first fully online degree programs were launched through the COL, which opened in 2023 and now offers six accredited degree programs that can be completed entirely online (COL)[123].

Affordability: Student Affairs prioritizes student questions about financial commitments and assistance. To aid students in navigating this unfamiliar territory, there are a variety of tools, sessions and resources that are offered, such as Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) workshops, information sessions, and open house recruitment events. Online workshops are offered and all students who receive aid have entrance counseling [47].

The College website has numerous pages devoted to guiding students to information on affordability and financial expectations. The "New Students" section directs prospective students to pages such as: "Cost of Attendance (net price calculator)"; "Financial Aid Information"; and "Tuition-Free College." The "First Time Students" [115] pages lead to "Financial Aid Information" and "Pay My Bill" including tuition payment plan options (FinAid)[125].

Continuing students can find support for their financial concerns on the financial aid office's pages [125]. Tools include links to FAFSA forms; videos in English and Spanish; workshop details; filing dates; policy statements; and more, including virtual support. Financial questions can also be submitted via Bergen Chat. The bursar maintains clear tuition and fees information, including cost of attendance and historic data on previous years (TuiFee)[126]. Fees for specific courses are outlined and a planning worksheet is available (CourFee)[127]; (PlanWS)[128]. Information on fees is also available in the College catalog [28 p397-425].

The Bergen Community College Foundation raises funds and distributes general and specialized scholarships to students three times per year (BCCFoun)[129]; [86] while also supporting initiatives such as study abroad programs [86]. Information about scholarship applications is published via the Bergen Daily, social media platforms, the PTK (Phi Theta Kappa) honors society website and the Foundation website (ScholarA)[130]; (PTKScholar)[131]. Scholarship recipients are highlighted in PR's publications, such as *Inside Bergen Community College*. Interest groups such as PTK and the STEM student group encourage students to apply for available national scholarships as well. Faculty advise students about opportunities throughout the academic year.

Bergen also enhances its affordability by maintaining an Open Educational Resources plan, as requested by the Office of the Secretary for Higher Education (OSHE) P.L.2019, c.77 (C.18A:3B-81 et seq.) (OERP) [133]. This plan was developed in order to reduce student expenses for textbooks in 20 of the most-enrolled GE courses. Further, Bergen is part of the Open Textbook Collaborative (OTC) project, which focuses on career and technical education courses (OTC) [134]. Traditionally taken by students in the first semester, an entire module of the IST-123 course is designed to address financial awareness [29]. Since the textbook is an Online Educational Resource (OER) at no cost to students, this barrier of access to course content has been reduced (ISTText) [132]. Meanwhile, the Sidney Silverman Library maintains a textbook collection for students to borrow at no cost, with copies of current textbooks and previous editions (IntMarks021624) [135].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the College utilized emergency CARES Act funding to support vulnerable students. Information Technology Services and Student Affairs implemented a program where students could borrow mobile devices, and wireless hotspots (SpaideInt022024) [57]. The SSL has continued this lending program [57] [135].

The free, award-winning CLAC offers tutoring, academic coaching, and support services (CLAC) [138] (AcadCoa) [139].

Student-parents have found relief at Bergen through the on-site Child Development Center (CDC) since 1982 (CDC) [140]. The CDC offers discounted childcare and other support programming for students through the CCAMPIS Grant Childcare (CCAMPIS) [141].

The Bergen Cares Center, which operates an on-site food pantry in partnership with a local non-profit group (Center for Food Action), actively supports students and staff. A growing collection of holistic support services include a clothing closet and assistance for bus passes, rent, and utilities (BCares) [142]. The center coordinator makes regular presentations on services, sends targeted announcements via text, email and social media and encourages word-of-mouth referrals. The Center, personal counselors, and Foundation work together to provide emergency financial support and services for students [86]. Representatives from these offices attend open house, orientation and resource fair events to educate students about services and to answer questions [112]. With the NJ Transit Student Pass (NJTransit) [136], students take advantage of a discount on transportation to the College (NJTransit2) [137]. A free College-run shuttle service open to both students and employees operates between the Paramus and Meadowlands locations.

The Veterans and Military Affairs Center assists eligible students in accessing their VA benefits, while providing connections to a variety of federal, state, and local programs and services, assisting with reintegration into civilian and academic life, and providing support, education, and emergency funding when necessary.

Additionally, partnerships with local K-12 schools such as early college, dual enrollment, and Bergen Experience (EarlyCol) [143] (DualEnr) [144] can translate into shortened completion timelines or lower college education costs.

Bergen maintains special tuition waivers for specific populations including senior citizens, the unemployed, those serving in the National Guard; Bergen County employees, and volunteer fire, first aid and rescue squad personnel and their immediate family members (TuiWaiv) [145].

Criterion II-8: Compliance with Reporting Requirements

The College meets compliance requirements through a transparent and comprehensive reporting process (InFedComp) [472], which includes its adherence to the Federal Student Right to Know law. Additionally, the College ensures the protection of student privacy through its compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) [146] and complies with the New Jersey Open Public Records Act (OPRA) while maintaining confidentiality and protecting student information.



Institutional assessments are shared publicly, following federal and state guidelines, while financial audits, facility assessments, CIE and IT service surveys are regularly conducted and reported to internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, Bergen complies with the MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and accurately represents its accreditation status. Compliance information is publicly available through the Student Consumer Information webpage.

Institution-wide Assessments, Graduation, Retention, Certification and Licensure or Licensing Board Pass

Rates: CIE focuses on assessing student learning and administrative and educational support units (CIE) [151] through direct assessments of student outcomes such as graduation rates, transfer rates, retention rates, and course completion rates. Indirect assessments involve measuring perceptions, satisfactions, and behaviors through surveys such as CCSSE, the Campus Climate Survey, the Student Basic Needs Survey, the New Student Survey, the Graduate Follow-Up Survey, and the Graduate Transfer Experience Survey [45]. Such assessments provide insights into the College’s performance and inform strategies for improvement across various areas, in line with its commitment to student success, innovation, and inclusivity. These institution-wide assessment results are disclosed to the College community and the public via the Bergen website, [151] as well as through presentations at various meetings and gatherings. CIE staff present survey results externally at national and regional conferences as well. Additionally, the Fact Book provides data relating to enrollment, graduates, personnel, College finances, and demographics [43]. Information regarding certification and licensure is posted on the website (Accred) [147], including licensing board pass rates for healthcare programs (HPPass) [148]. Also, the SSL completes an annual Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) report that is integrated into the College’s IPEDS report. This aligns with national standards and fulfills federal reporting requirements with the Department of Education [135].

Individual departments conduct assessments throughout the year, including ITS, which sends brief service surveys from its Helpdesk system. The results are compiled monthly and shared with the Chief Information Officer (CIO), the Cabinet and the Management Team. Meanwhile, facilities assessment results are reported to the BOT and the College community through committee meetings, shared with the Cabinet and used extensively within the facilities department. The Office of Finance also shares assessments both internally and externally, such as annual financial statements, audit reports, and board resolutions that are publicly available on the website. The Cabinet reviews and discusses assessments from each area before filing copies with the President.

Compliance with Commission Requirements of Affiliation, Policies, and Substantive Change: Bergen provides compliance with the Commission’s Requirements of Affiliation with this Self-Study and through the Annual Institutional Update (AIU). The AIU includes metrics that are reviewed and discussed internally and inform decisions across the College (AIUInd) [468]. Bergen does not have any substantive changes to report regarding its mission, goals, programs, operations, sites, and other material issues.

Criterion II-9: Assessment of Ethics and Integrity

Bergen demonstrates a commitment to ethics and integrity through periodic assessments of its policies, processes, and practices. These assessments are integrated into institutional governance and ensure transparency and fairness in all operations. The College continuously evaluates its practices, adjusting as needed to uphold ethical standards. The process involves reviews of institutional behavior, decision-making, and the implementation of policies to ensure they align with the College’s values and ethical obligations to its community and stakeholders. These assessments are key to maintaining the College’s ethical integrity.

Periodic Assessment of Ethics and Integrity in Policies, Processes, and Practices

Policies: Overseen by the PAC and clearly published on the website, Bergen’s policies and procedures are transparent. The process of how to create or revise a policy is also explained [118]. Meetings of the ACF consistently provide opportunities for input into policy revisions. Policies are evaluated for ethics and integrity within the PAC framework. Members assess each policy against existing College policies, professional educational standards, and legal requirements. The mission, vision values and goals serve as guiding

principles in this evaluation, ensuring the development of ethical and honest policies that align with institutional objectives and regulatory mandates [1][70][89]. The broad representation aids in identifying potential conflicts, augmented by legal counsel reviews, ensuring alignment with state and federal laws. From initial drafting in the responsible office and assignment to a responsible executive, through the final approval by the President and BOT, potential conflicts are scrutinized throughout the stages of policy development and review. A responsible Cabinet member reviews and/or revises policies every three years (or as required by law) (GADM007-001.2019) [149]. New policies, ones with substantive changes, and policies considered for deletion all require a Stakeholder Review (GADM006-001.2018) [150]. College policies are brought to the BOT for approval.

Processes and Practices: College leadership upholds the importance of ethical conduct and strong principles and values in the policies, procedures, and practices that guide their work areas. Guidance for policies and procedures is often taken from prevailing regulatory requirements and/or industry best practices [23][51][57][84][85][135]. In 2023, the College created the position of Director of College Compliance, tasked with supervising policy and procedural compliance with external authorities. This position embodies the commitment to addressing and updating policies and procedures in a timely manner. Examples include ITS, which collaborates closely with the Office of Purchasing to ensure strict compliance with state purchasing laws and adherence to the established purchasing process for technology procurement and financing [57]. Likewise, Facilities outlined their collaborative efforts with HR, Purchasing, and legal counsel. Periodic reviews of the vendor selection processes ensure fairness and diversity, drawing upon comparisons with similar institutions to refine practices. Financial audits and board meeting resolutions are publicly available on the website, ensuring transparency in financial matters [51]. Student Affairs reviews its policies, procedures, and practices annually. All policies are vetted through shared governance (e.g. PAC and ACF) and input from legal counsel and the Office of Compliance, when necessary. This ensures ongoing scrutiny and refinement of processes to uphold ethical standards [22]. Annual reports are also a method for divisions and departments to assess operations [22]. Academic Program Reviews are another mechanism by which programs and procedures are examined on a regular basis. This process is addressed in detail in Standard V.

Standard II Conclusion

Bergen meets Standard II and Requirement of Affiliation 8, which addresses systematic evaluation of educational and other programs to ensure the institution is achieving its goals. Ethics and integrity are embedded in the College's mission, practices, and policies. The College promotes academic freedom, respect for faculty, staff, and students, and upholds fair hiring practices. Bergen demonstrates its commitment to truth and accuracy in both internal and external communications. The College regularly evaluates academic and non-academic areas to maintain compliance with all regulations and requirements.

Institutional Strengths

1. The College demonstrates a strong commitment to regular and accurate dissemination of information to both internal and external stakeholders.
2. The College has a well-defined process for policy review and documentation, and conflict of interest language is embedded in policies and procedures.
3. The College is deeply committed to fostering an environment of respect and belonging for all of its community, contributing to a positive and inclusive campus culture.

Institutional Opportunities

1. The College should continue its work of enhancing the accessibility of policies and procedures by consolidating them into more centralized locations on the portal and website where appropriate.
2. The College should communicate more clearly the procedures concerning employee promotions, merit raises, and grievance resolution.
3. Bergen should remain committed to reviewing ethics and integrity, ensuring that they are woven into the assessment guidelines for all departments.



Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all programs, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

Bergen complies with MSCHE Standard 3, Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience, as demonstrated through the institution's adherence to the Requirements of Affiliation (RoA) #8, systematic evaluation of all programs; #9, student learning programs and opportunities; and #15, qualified core faculty. Our commitment to these standards ensures that Bergen provides a high-quality education that meets and exceeds higher education expectations.

Criterion I: certificate, undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional programs leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential, of a length appropriate to the objectives of the degree or other credential, designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning

Bergen equips students for a seamless transition to four-year colleges or direct entry into the workforce upon program completion. With programs leading to A.A., A.S., A.A.S., and A.F.A. degrees and certificates (Catalog23) [28 p10-187], the institution maintains four academic divisions: Business and Social Sciences (BSS), Health Professions (HP), Humanities (Hum), and Mathematics, Science, and Technology (MST). Additionally, the SSL and Student Affairs areas also include faculty (OrgCh24) [153 p3].

Faculty and administration collaborate on the Curriculum Committee, Learning Assessment Committee, and General Education Committee, providing robust oversight to ensure academic programs maintain rigor and depth (FSConst23) [20]. Additionally, the President, VPAA, and VPSA meet monthly with the Faculty Senate officers to discuss curricular and other matters.

The College Catalog (Catalog23) [28] lists academic program offerings, suggested semester sequencing, and course descriptions. Courses are offered in in-person, online, and hybrid formats, making them accessible to the diverse student population the College serves. Fifteen-, twelve-, and seven- week semester courses are offered in the fall and spring. Six-week summer and three-week winter sessions are also offered.

Associate Degrees: Curriculum proposals and maintenance are initiated by faculty, according to the Faculty Constitution [20], and supported by the Office of Curriculum (Curr) [422]. As part of the curriculum proposal process, a review ensures programs adhere to the NJ Administrative Code 9A:1-2.3 (NJ9A:1) [154] for the number of credits; 60 credits for most programs. Courses seeking General Education (GE) status have additional stipulations outlined in Criteria 3.5.

The College's Curriculum Committee [422] is charged with ensuring academic rigor and depth in all course and program proposals. Student learning outcomes and course content are examined at both the course and program level (for more examples of this, see Standard V). The comprehensive GE program (GEFrame) [382]; (LEAP24) [383]; (GEOut) [384]; offers students courses [28 p187-191] in various disciplines to provide a well-rounded education and follows the guidelines of the NJCCC (NJSA18A:64A-26) [423] and [382]. Reflecting Bergen's mission (Mission) [1], students pursuing A.A. degrees must complete a three-credit diversity requirement.

Certificate programs allow students to earn credentials that align with the knowledge and skills necessary for employment. Certificate programs require 30 credits that are aligned with relevant degree programs.

All curricula are developed to ensure that students receive a high-quality learning experience and achieve mastery of learning outcomes regardless of their plans. Part of this development process is outlining learning outcomes and aligning them with broader educational goals and standards set forth by accrediting bodies, NJ Higher Education standards, and Bergen's mission, vision, and goals [1]. Sequencing and progression must be logical, documented, and presented to the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and GE Committee (if applicable) to demonstrate the need for courses and programs.



Curriculum mapping (CurMaps) [157] assists with aligning course objectives and sequences and is a required element of the program review (ProRevHan) [156] process (See Standard V). The comprehensive review of programs and thorough review of actions impact departments' annual assessment projects by focusing efforts and streamlining the reporting process.

With the recent addition of course blueprints for online asynchronous courses, the master syllabus for each course will become a living document through Bergen's LMS, Canvas. Blueprinting allows departments to ensure that each faculty member presents students with necessary information and content through a standardized, agreed-upon Canvas shell. The course blueprint also encourages department faculty to collaborate, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and engagement.

An essential aspect of Bergen's educational offerings is preparing students for today's workforce [1]. All A.A.S. programs (and many other programs) have mandatory advisory boards made up of employers and faculty from transfer institutions. Accrediting agencies oversee 10 programs in the health professions area (HPAcced) [424], and all program reviews involve an outside evaluator. All programs with outside accreditation have maintained their status, confirming the College's continuing commitment to maintaining academic excellence. Ensuring transparency and accountability in evaluating programs is paramount to the College's continuous improvement and fulfillment of its intended objectives. (Addresses RoA #9).

Publicly shared documents, such as the annual Fact Book (FB23) [43], IPEDS data submissions, and program accreditation status, demonstrate Bergen's use of quantitative data. These reports disseminate information on program effectiveness and achievements, which engages stakeholders in a dialogue about performance and invites input and collaboration to pursue shared goals. Shared successes, challenges, and lessons learned contribute to Bergen's collective knowledge base and foster meaningful change. (Addresses RoA # 8).

Criterion II: Student learning experiences that are designed, delivered, and assessed by faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals

Faculty are dedicated to effective teaching, assessment, and scholarly inquiry, aligning with the institution's mission, goals, and policies [1]. Bergen's faculty is known for its student-centered approach and commitment to maintaining rigorous academic standards (TCredM13) [158]. The VPAA plays a crucial role in appointing faculty and the process for the awarding of tenure and promotion. The VPAA's recommendations are then approved by the President and the Board of Trustees (TenHan) [99] (FacPro) [159]. The Faculty Association Agreement (FacContract19) [15] outlines three focus areas for faculty members' promotion: teaching and instructional activities, professional growth and scholarly/creative endeavors, and contributions to the community [159]. Each year, tenured faculty submit an Annual Record of Activities (TRA) [101] to their dean for review. These annual records highlight accomplishments in teaching, service to the College and community, and scholarship.

Bergen encourages, values, and celebrates teaching excellence. Faculty members recommended for NISOD Award recognition are a testament to this focus on celebrating excellence. (NISOD20) [425]. The College also provides significant support through the Faculty Scholarship Release Time program (FSRT) [426], which aids those focusing on research. These initiatives are overseen by the VPAA and the FD Committee.

In 2023, Bergen employed 848 instructional faculty members, including 210 full-time instructional, and 638 part-time adjunct faculty members. Among the full-time instructional faculty, 154 are tenured, 27 are on the tenure-track, and 29 are non-tenured track, as documented in the 2024 Fact Book [43]. In addition, there are 30 full-time non-instructional faculty: 28 are tenured and two are on tenure-track. Potential tenure-track faculty are interviewed by a committee of faculty members, the divisional dean, and the VPAA. Once hired, the tenure-track faculty receive the Tenure Handbook [99], which outlines a student-centered approach to demonstrating excellence in teaching. To be eligible for tenure, faculty engage in a research-based professional development project and ongoing professional development practice under the guidance of a mentor. The activities of tenured faculty include teaching individual courses, development of new courses and

programs, scholarly growth, publications, professional activities, consulting, presentations, community service, and grant work.

The growth and development of one’s teaching practice is an expectation for tenure. In support of this requirement, workshops are offered by CITL and the FD Committee, which include in-person sessions, multi-day training, and year-long professional development opportunities to help faculty learn and use best-practice strategies and techniques.

Although the number of faculty members has decreased over the past five years, the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty has remained consistent, given the decrease and recovery of enrollment from 2019 to 2023 (Table 3).

Table 3. Ratio of Full-Time to Part-Time Faculty (Fall 2019 to Fall 2023)

	Full-Time Faculty	Part-Time Faculty	Total
Term	N	N	N
Fall 2019	221	699	920
Fall 2020	205	564	769
Fall 2021	210	574	784
Fall 2022	213	560	773
Fall 2023	210	638	848

Source: IPEDS Human Resources Survey

To recruit and hire qualified and experienced part-time faculty, an adjunct job fair is held at the end of every academic year. Potential candidates meet academic leaders in their discipline to submit resumes and learn about available positions. The minimum qualification for an adjunct professor to be hired for the teaching position is a master’s degree in the area of instruction, with a few exceptions to this in hotel/restaurant management and health professions. Additional requirements include teaching experience and willingness to participate in professional development.

Faculty Development: Faculty are supported by ongoing professional development offered through Academic Affairs, including the CITL, FD, Equity Council, and Literary Arts Series. The New Faculty Mentoring Program, student evaluations, and classroom observations are designed to help faculty revisit their courses, evaluate the feedback, and amend classroom procedures to improve the student learning experience.

Strategic Plan Goal 1.3 (Strategic24) [2] promotes fostering greater faculty and staff engagement in Bergen students’ educational journeys by increasing their involvement in the College’s programs and services. The College is committed to providing sufficient opportunities and support for faculty to ensure student success, and promote innovation, and inclusivity. FD and CITL offer workshops on using instructional technology, the promotion and tenure process, and assessment (FD22) [52], (FD23) [53], (CITLWor) [162]. In 2022-2023, CITL offered 146 workshops to familiarize faculty with Canvas. CITL offers self-paced, live, and one-on-one support. Each fall and spring, a faculty and staff development day includes dialogue on equity, student success, and assessing student learning. Tuition reimbursement at the rate of Rutgers University is provided to faculty pursuing additional master’s and doctoral degrees.

Since 2018, Bergen has offered its faculty a yearlong ACUE professional development program on effective teaching practices in face-to-face and online courses. Faculty who completed the ACUE training implemented new teaching practices that promote active learning, higher-order thinking, productive learning environments, and effective course design. Additionally, 109 full-time and part-time faculty members have



been awarded certificates endorsed by the American Council on Education (ACE) for completing a course in excellence in teaching (ACUE1) [163]; (ACUE2) [164].

Online learning is woven into the College's mission, vision, and strategic planning framework. The College is committed to providing accessible programs to meet the needs of an ever-changing student population. Bergen has dedicated resources and services to support partially and fully online programs (CITL) [427] through the COL.

Bergen's online professor training program (TOPP) helps faculty design, teach, and meet the College's quality standards. This training program developed by faculty, and informed by current regulations and requirements for online education, is training key to providing high quality learning experiences to students. Although during the COVID pandemic (2020-2021) this program was paused for logistical reasons, a self-paced "Fundamentals of Online Teaching" course and a facilitated "Effective Online Teaching Practices" course from ACUE were made available to faculty. As the College returned to campus, a rigorous course review was conducted for more than 150 courses during summer 2022 to meet the demand for online offerings and quality assurance. TOPP resumed in fall 2022 to train faculty to design online courses. As the College has moved to using the Blueprint model for standardized course design, TOPP is currently under review by the VPAA and CITL to update the sequence to better reflect the current state of online instruction. For example, the first level of TOPP is focused on course design, but this is now managed through the Blueprinting process. TOPP levels two and three are focused on pedagogy.

In 2022, the COL was launched with two fully online degrees. Since that time, COL has grown to six online degree programs. Students in these cohorts are immersed in the learning experience and are supported with services such as tutoring and the SSL that are vital for engagement. To further foster greater consistency, all online courses are built using a Canvas template through the Blueprinting process to meet the Quality Matters standards (EILCOL) [336].

To encourage participation in professional development opportunities, the College offers adjunct faculty a stipend upon completing the Adjunct Faculty Development Program (AFDP) [428]. The adjunct office has a dedicated computer lab and a lounge to provide space and equipment to part-time faculty. They also attend bi-annual conferences to learn about academic services and programs. Adjunct faculty may also enroll tuition free in one Bergen course each semester during which they teach.

Faculty are encouraged to use plagiarism detectors such as Turnitin and remote proctoring solutions to maintain academic integrity. Preliminary guidance for faculty in using AI is available on the College website (AITool) [429].

Travel: Travel funds are allocated to each division and distributed to faculty based on the purpose of travel. Opportunities to request additional funding are available through the dean of the division, the VPAA, or President. Faculty are required to submit a report to the dean upon completing a trip. As scholarly growth is a requirement for tenure and promotion, travel to and presenting at discipline-specific conferences and symposia are essential and documented in divisional annual reports.

Teaching Assessments: Tenured faculty members and the divisional dean evaluate tenure-track full-time faculty through yearly classroom observations (TTObserv) [430]. Department chairs and coordinators, along with tenured department faculty observe part-time faculty (AdjObs) [102]. After each observation, a meeting is held to provide constructive feedback to the observed faculty member. In addition, each semester, a course evaluation survey is sent to all students to collect their experiences and provide feedback to the teaching faculty. Per the Faculty Association Agreement [15], administrators may view these reports for adjuncts, lecturers, and tenure-track faculty, but not for tenured faculty.

Bergen complies with the requirement regarding core faculty and professional responsibility as outlined in

Standards for Accreditation and Requirements for Affiliation, thirteenth edition. Bergen places emphasis on the importance of a dedicated and qualified core of faculty and professionals to ensure the continuity and coherence of our educational programs. (Addresses RoA #15)

Criterion III. Academic programs of study that are clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution in a way that students are able to understand and follow degree and program requirements and expected time to completion

Bergen places importance on the College Catalog and Student Self-Service portal, as they are the key resources for understanding degree requirements and academic programs.

The College's online catalog (CatalogW) [431] is a comprehensive resource that provides students with Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), career pathways, current employment and salary trends, and a semester-by-semester requirements checklist. This tool allows students to identify program electives and effectively track their progress. The Catalog provides degree requirements for all A.A., A.S., A.F.A., A.A.S., and Certificate programs. Each 60-credit A.A., A.S., A.F.A., and A.A.S. program is presented in a four-semester sequence with approximately 15 credits per semester, encouraging full-time students to graduate in two years. The exceptions are the health professions A.A.S. programs incorporating summer sessions; their credit total is 60-66 credits [28 p10-187] Certificate (30 credits) and Certificate of Achievement (12-18 credits) options are also offered. Each Certificate program is presented as a two or three-semester plan, while the Certificate of Achievement is presented as a one or two-semester plan.

In 2018, New Jersey reduced the total credit for degree programs from 66 to 60 credits. This change directly impacted program requirements. To meet the new guidelines, academic departments, in collaboration with the Curriculum Committee, reviewed all programs. After review, and modification if needed, each program was presented to the Faculty Senate for approval. The College Catalog now reflects the updated programs.

The online student portal creates a seamless experience for students to view their academic program, see remaining requirements, and access a list of GE courses. Students who wish to view a different program can easily do so and see how changing their major is possible without losing credits for completed coursework. The portal (StuPort) [432] is introduced to students as part of new student advising, is a unit in the IST-123 course, and is used throughout their time at Bergen. (Addresses RoA #10)

Criterion IV: Sufficient learning opportunities and resources to support both the institution's programs of study and students' academic progress

Bergen offers excellent resources for a student's academic progress and completion. Student support occurs from the day of admission and continues throughout the student's studies. Convenient support services are accessible in numerous modalities to meet students' preferences. Standard 4 focuses on overall support, while Standard 3 focuses on support related to learning.

All student academic support services are provided by qualified professionals [28 p192-206]. Services include tutoring, health, wellness, personal counseling, advising and academic counseling, career and workforce counseling, transfer services, and the behavioral intervention teams. In addition, there is the SSL, Office of Student Life, and support services for diverse student groups such as OSS, Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF), PTK, Honors, New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship Program (NJ STARS), International Student Center, Veterans and Military Affairs Center, and the Child Development Center.

Academic success is a multifaceted endeavor, often requiring various forms of support beyond traditional classroom instruction. Bergen employs diverse resources to assist students in achieving their academic goals. Resources such as the SSL and CLAC are available to students without qualifications. Programs such as the EOF program, OSS, and Honors are available as well. All of these services are designed to support classroom learning.



The SSL is a hub of academic support, offering a wealth of resources and services to facilitate learning and research (InfoLit) [435]. From access to scholarly journals and databases to expert assistance from librarians, students benefit from a wide range of resources contributing to their academic progress. The SSL recognizes its integral role in supporting the College's mission and curriculum by providing diverse student learners with information resources that promote academic excellence and foster lifelong learning. The SSL provides quiet study spaces, group collaboration rooms, and technology resources to accommodate various learning preferences and needs. Additionally, librarians' one-on-one sessions equip students with essential research skills and information literacy, empowering them to excel academically.

The CLAC is an award-winning tutoring center (CLAC16) [433] offering academic support for over 250 courses through various services, including one-on-one appointments, walk-in services, study groups, in-class tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, online tutoring, the College Transfer Essay Program, and academic coaching. Tutoring services are available at no cost for all currently enrolled students. Tutoring is offered on the main campus and online. The CLAC is committed to providing academic support and fostering independent learning for all Bergen students in a nurturing environment. Academic support is rendered utilizing a purposeful, student-centered approach. The CLAC encompasses several centers that provide specialized tutoring to students. These include the Ender Math and Science Walk-In Center, Writing Center, English Language Resource Center (ELRC), and Supplemental Instruction Center.

- The Ender Math and Science Walk-In Center offers tutorial support in a collaborative setting. Academic interactions allow for reciprocal learning and peer collaboration. The Center is available to all registered students; no appointments are required.
- The Writing Center provides support for academic writing across the curriculum. Students work closely with peer and professional tutors on all facets of the writing process, from developing and refining ideas to revising their writing, to practicing effective self-editing strategies. Tutors offer a supportive environment in which students can practice critical thinking in all their assignments, take intellectual risks, and learn to do academic research, reading, and writing.
- ELRC offers students whose native language is not English assistance with grammar, reading, writing, and speech. Tutoring is delivered on-campus and online.
- Following a needs-assessment analysis, the CLAC was recently renovated.

College support services for special populations foster inclusivity and academic success at Bergen. These services cater to individuals with diverse needs, including students with disabilities, high-achieving students, economically disadvantaged students, and veterans. By providing tailored assistance such as academic tutoring, counseling, mentorship programs, and accessibility accommodations, these support services ensure that every student has equitable opportunities to thrive academically. These services enhance academic performance and foster personal growth and development, equipping students with the necessary tools to navigate their college journey successfully. Ultimately, they contribute significantly to special populations' overall academic success and well-being.

- OSS [121] – OSS plays a vital role in ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities. This office strives to allow students to participate in Bergen's educational programs by promoting universal design principles and providing reasonable accommodations to all students with a documented disability to foster an accessible and equitable learning environment. OSS assists faculty in creating an inclusive learning environment where all students can succeed. Through collaboration with faculty and staff, OSS facilitates the implementation of accommodations tailored to the unique needs of each student, thus leveling the playing field and promoting academic progress for students with disabilities. Information provided on the OSS website is clear and in varying modalities, as demonstrated in this video example (AccomF) [122].
- EOF (EOF) [434] provides a support system sensitive to its program participants. EOF-eligible students are determined based on economic and educational criteria set forth by the New Jersey State Legislature to provide economically and educationally disadvantaged students the opportunity to obtain a college education. By addressing barriers to success, such as financial constraints and lack of academic preparedness, EOF empowers students to thrive academically. EOF students may receive an EOF grant and

academic support services to enhance their college experience and ensure success.

- NJSTARS [436] is an initiative created by the State of New Jersey. The program provides New Jersey's highest achieving high school students with free tuition at their home county college for 12-18 credits per semester, for a duration of five semesters. Eighty-seven percent of NJ STARS students graduate with an associate's degree and transfer to four-year colleges (NJ STARS Data) [475].
- The Veterans and Military Affairs Center ensures that service members and veterans focus on academic success, but also assists with reintegration into civilian and student life. The team from Veteran Connections, composed of faculty, staff, and veteran students, provides veteran-specific counseling, advice, and information on benefits under the Post-9/11 GI bill (Chapter 33) and resources to facilitate college success.

Various educational offerings are also based on specific courses and enhancements that further knowledge and understanding.

- Learning Communities (LC) offer students the ability to enrich their college experience with deeper learning, a built-in support system, and scheduling convenience by having the same classmates in two classes. Faculty collaborate on assignments, learning methods, and topics. In spring 2024, 26 courses were paired for 13 learning communities (LCdata) [437].
- Judith K. Winn School of Honors offers eligible students' honors courses and courses that are honors-by-contract. By accruing 18 honors credits, students are awarded an Honors Diploma upon graduation. These courses typically feature smaller class sizes, enriched curricula, and increased interaction with faculty. Additionally, participation in honors programs enhances students' academic resumes and prepares them for advanced study and professional success. In FY 2024, 40 courses were offered as part of the Honors Program (Honors23) [172].
- The Supplemental Instruction Center, part of the CLAC, is a Certified Supplemental Instruction (SI) program that strives to improve student success in targeted courses. The SI supervisor and leader receive intensive training in providing SI sessions two to three times a week for targeted courses. During SI sessions, the group reviews lecture notes, discusses questions, applies concepts, and learns tips and new study skills to help participants become more independent as learners, more confident, and more successful in the course.
- The Interdisciplinary Center for Simulation is a state-of-the-art simulation center within health professions. The center prepares entry-level practitioners to meet and exceed the healthcare needs of today's world while simultaneously cultivating relationships between disciplines to enhance the quality of patient care. Key concepts in the simulation learning environment include patient safety, communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, teamwork, cultural competence, informatics, and evidence-based practice.
- The STEM Research Center includes a lab with state-of-the-art equipment such as 3-D and laser printers, advanced electronics, and drones. The STEM Student Scholars Program (3SP) creates research opportunities for students, assists students with research opportunities outside of the College, and helps students transfer to four-year institutions.

Criterion V: At institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, freestanding or integrated into academic disciplines, that:

- a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field;**
- b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.**

General Education: Bergen has a diverse student population interested in entering the workforce after graduating or transferring to four-year colleges and universities. Bergen offers a comprehensive GE program vital to student development and success regardless of their goal. The GE program provides a wide variety of courses that are important in the development of skills and abilities of students and their concentrations in degree programs. More than 180 credit courses are available within the GE program [28 p187-191]. This vast number of courses also includes interdisciplinary electives.

In the 2016 Self-Study (MS16) [174], Bergen maintained 150 GE courses. The number of GE courses offered has since grown. This significant growth is a testament to Bergen's commitment to providing a comprehensive and evolving GE program to meet the needs of students. Courses are structured to help students learn and gain knowledge on some of the most critical emerging phenomena in society, science, and technology. The meticulously designed program aligns with the goals in oral and written communications, scientific reasoning, and technological competency identified by the NJCCC (NJFound22) [175]. The GE Committee, dedicated to maintaining the quality of courses, handles any issues related to GE courses or courses seeking GE status. A GE course must meet 14 specific characteristics, and approving a new GE course involves a thorough 7-step process. GE Program details are readily available on the Bergen website [28 p187-191] and catalog [28].

The three GE programs (LA.GEN, PS.GEN, and NSM.GEN) emphasize oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

The last Self-Study completed in 2016 had two recommendations for GE programs: 1) maintain a master syllabus for each course in the general education program and 2) establish diversity requirements for GE programs. In response, every GE course has a master syllabus (GEPolicy13) [176] that can be found online in "syllabi central" (SylC) [380]. There is no state requirement for a diversity course within programs; therefore, it is not mandatory to fulfill the diversity requirement, but most GE courses in humanities and social sciences address diverse perspectives. Program learning outcomes of the liberal arts general study (AA.LA.GEN) particularly focus on cultural and global awareness, values, ethics, and diverse perspectives. While it is not specified in the other two GE programs – professional studies (PS.GEN) and natural science and mathematics (NSM.GEN) – "cultural and global awareness, values, ethics, and diverse perspectives" are incorporated in both because they have a minimum of 18 liberal arts GE credits.

Table 4. Liberal Arts General Education (LA.GEN)

Area of Study	Credit Requirements
Communication	9
History electives	6
Humanities	9
Social Science	6
Natural Science and Mathematics	9
Information Technology	3
Diversity elective	3
Total General Education credits	45

Table 5. Professional Studies General Education (PS.GEN)

Area of Study	Credit Requirements
Communication	9
Humanities electives	6
Social Science electives	3
Natural Science and Mathematics	12
Total General Education credits	30

Table 6. Natural Science and Mathematics General Education (NSM.GEN)

Area of Study	Credit Requirements
Communication	9
Humanities electives	6
Social Science electives	3
Natural Science and Mathematics	12
Total General Education credits	30

The previously mentioned change in the total credit requirement for degree programs in New Jersey, from 66 credits to 60 credits, forced the degree programs and options to move some GE courses from "required" to "elective." All three GE programs were affected. Almost all the courses offered at Bergen are under the umbrella of general education; therefore, the credit reduction in 2018 did not significantly alter general education programs.

Currently, the chair of the GE committee is implementing a new system for GE program assessment. The main focus of this system is to integrate GE program assessment with departmental-level degree program assessments. This integration allows the collection of data on GE program assessment within the overall process of college assessment cycles.

Criteria VI: Not Applicable

Criterion VII: An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities: adequate and appropriate institutional review and approval on any student learning opportunities designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers;

The College provides instruction via third party providers both in credit and non-credit areas (3rdParTeach) [332]. Continuing Education maintains appropriate review via its contract guidelines (3rdParCE) [333], while the credit programs use a standard contract (3rdParCon) [334]. The College evaluates third-party CE vendors by gathering feedback through course evaluations sent to all program participants (CEEval) [335] and assesses vendor performance by tracking completion rates for each program.

Clinical placements in the credit area are determined by the clinical coordinator of the program, prior to the clinical agency and the College establishing a contractual agreement with clinical sites. Once a clinical site is established, ongoing evaluation of clinical sites is conducted by clinical faculty, who meet with unit managers or clinical agency educators at the beginning and end of each semester. The minutes of these meetings (ClinMin) [465] are then reviewed by the clinical coordinator to determine continued clinical placement. Additionally, bi-annual advisory board meetings attended by clinical affiliates provide collaborative discussions regarding student learning needs and appropriate clinical placements.

The College secured the third-party provider services of Ellucian to support the delivery of online courses. Ellucian provides the Executive Director of the COL as well as other support positions. Ellucian does not create content but works closely with Bergen's faculty and related subject matter experts to develop online courses via an iterative process that applies best practices and standards to courses. Final decisions on course content and format are at the sole discretion of the faculty, deans, and VPAA. Ellucian does provide technical assistance in such areas as creating new course shells and ongoing course upgrades.

The VPAA meets bi-weekly with the Executive Director of the COL to ensure that the College is offering quality courses to meet COL student needs, discuss the Blueprinting project that is expanding to all online courses, and plan for upcoming semesters. In addition, Ellucian provides a written monthly report (ElCOL) [336] that includes courses in development, courses currently being offered in a given semester, training, and projected future projects. The CFO, VPAA and the President evaluate Ellucian's progress monthly.

Criterion VIII. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs providing student learning opportunities.

At Bergen, two major ways of assessing the effectiveness of programs providing student learning opportunities are annual course assessments and periodic program reviews. Both approaches have been revamped during the last two years to streamline and strengthen the process and ensure that it is effective regardless of department/program size or type.

Under the leadership of a recently appointed dean, the CIE [151] has engaged in a systematic overhaul of processes and procedures used for ongoing course assessment and periodic program reviews. This ongoing

effort notably includes a shortening of the assessment cycle from two years to one year, revisions to reporting forms used from Word documents to Laserfiche, a more visible role of division deans in the approval process, providing more effective support for faculty involved in assessment processes from Assessment Fellows and through a series of workshops, and the creation of a mechanism for using assessment results to close the loop. Importantly, these procedural edits and additions aim to ensure that course, program, and institutional learning goals and outcomes are aligned (Addresses RoA #9).

To simplify the process of annual course assessments and periodic program reviews, formal completion guidelines have been organized into a user-friendly handbook (AssessH24) [375] that expands on instructions provided in previous years. This newer version of the guidelines, developed by the Dean of RIE and Assessment Fellows, incorporates results from four successive annual course assessments into each program review, thus producing a more comprehensive analysis of any designated program's challenges and successes in meeting its stated goals. Notably, the LAC, a standing subcommittee of the Faculty Senate, is now also utilized as an ongoing advisory group for the assessment process, allowing more faculty input into the overall assessment process.

Standard III Conclusion

Bergen's academic offerings comply with MSCHE Standard 3 and Requirements of Affiliation numbers 8, 9, 10, and 15. The College has a robust selection of programs and courses to meet the needs of our students and fulfill our mission as a comprehensive community college, which includes a well-developed array of student support and advancement services. Programs and options are assessed on a regular basis to ensure quality. Full-time and adjunct faculty are well qualified and offered professional development opportunities each year.

Institutional Strengths

1. The College offers a comprehensive array of programs and options to meet the needs of our diverse student body.
2. The full-time to adjunct faculty ratio remains consistent.
3. Student support services, particularly the CLAC, are robust and nationally recognized.
4. Students are afforded excellent opportunities, such as the Judith K. Winn School of Honors, STEM Research Center, and Interdisciplinary Center for Simulation, to excel in their studies beyond the typical community college classroom experience.

Institutional Opportunities

1. To continue to ensure that programs and curricula are aligned with emerging academic trends and workforce needs, comply with timelines for program reviews, and expand the use of linkage meetings to address stated findings and recommendations.
2. Institutional standards and procedures for resource allocation, such as new tenure-track faculty lines, need widespread communication to ensure all impacted parties are aware of decision-making criteria and processes.

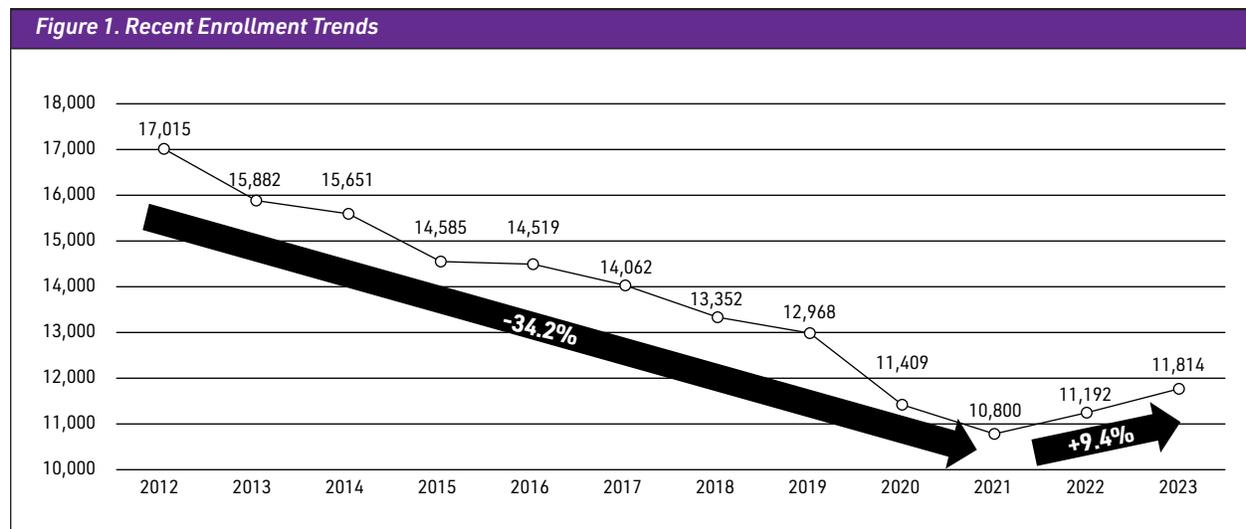


Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals align with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Bergen remains committed to recruiting and admitting students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals align with its mission and educational offerings, across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities. To support student retention, persistence, completion, and success, Bergen has developed a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals. This system enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes significantly to educational experience, and fosters student success. The College adheres to principles of access, equity, and inclusion, offering educational programs and services that promote success for students of various abilities and economic needs. By providing evidence of effective educational experiences and enabling community members to engage in lifelong learning opportunities, Bergen cultivates community relationships and supports a growing network of partnerships with external organizations. Through numerous channels, the College proudly shares stories of success as a vital resource in Bergen County and the surrounding region.

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan: All enrollment and retention efforts are presently found in the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMP) [177]. The SEM Plan was redesigned in 2022 with the support of partners at EAB. The plan is now managed by a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee of the ACF. The SEM Plan complements the Academic Master Plan (AMP) and is designed to foster a comprehensive understanding of the College’s enrollment landscape and catalyze positive change. By collecting and interpreting data, the Bergen SEM team has created a strategic approach that is goal-oriented, actionable, measurable, and aligned with institutional priorities.



The plan outlines key steps in the planning process, including performance analyses, market assessments (current and future), strategy prioritization, and a planning timeline. The development of this plan involved utilizing multiple data sources, tools, and exercises, which were reviewed by the Bergen SEM team and the campus community. The framework is designed as an active document throughout the plan’s lifespan, allowing for annual updates and memorialization. Progress is continuously tracked, with modifications made as necessary to ensure ongoing alignment with institutional goals and priorities. Initiatives and action items in the plan contributed to halting a 10-year enrollment decline in fall 2022 (plus three percent). Enrollment has increased every semester thereafter. Bergen is beginning to focus on creating and implementing a strategic retention plan over the next year.

Recruitment and Enrollment: Bergen has clearly stated ethical policies and processes in place to admit (Catalog23) [28 p231-255], retain [28 p192-206], and facilitate the success of students. As an open access, public community college serving a diverse student population, Bergen’s admissions policy (AdmissPC) [337] supports the success of applicants as they enroll. The recruitment and admission processes are guided

by the mission (Mission) [1] and strategic theme 1 - student achievement and enrollment (Strategic24) [2]. The Office of Admissions, in collaboration with other campus offices, coordinates efforts involved in student onboarding, engagement, and support. Continuous improvement is a guiding principle, including communicating placement, scheduling, advising, and registration, to enhance the student experience. A communication plan (ComPlan24) [466] keeps prospective students engaged throughout the admission cycle, aiming to increase the number of enrolled students. The remodeled One Stop Center creates a seamless experience for all enrollment service needs.

Admissions Events: Bergen is committed to serving the community and actively engaging prospective students. The Office of Admissions leads and participates in recruitment events both on and off-campus. Admissions staff engage in various activities and events to connect with prospective students and their families (AdmissEC) [338] including high school visits, college fairs, campus tours (multilingual), on-site visits/workshops, college nights, instant admission events, local and regional community events, open houses, group information events, fast track express enrollment days, community engagement events, and early college program support. After each event, admissions staff contact students who share their information to build connections, encourage enrollment, and lay the groundwork for success. Bergen uses a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Radius by Anthology, to automate and manage communications, improving recruitment and support efforts from initial inquiry to enrollment.

Criterion IV-I(a): Accurate and Comprehensive Student Financial Information

The College provides accurate and comprehensive information regarding expenses, financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, repayment, and refunds through multiple methods:

Online Resources: Comprehensive information is available on the admissions (WedAdmit) [114], bursar (BBScreen) [178], tuition and fees (TuiFee) [126], and financial aid (FinAid) [125] pages. These pages encourage early FAFSA completion, explain financial aid and scholarship options, provide access to withdrawal, refund, and financial aid policies, outline the cost of attendance, and offer payment plan options. They also link to a net price calculator, detail the components of a bill, and connect students to the financial aid office. In addition, all students who apply are sent a "Thank You for Applying" letter that references the Consumer Information (StuRTK) [179] page. This page provides detailed information for those considering enrolling at Bergen.

Print and Digital Materials: Regularly updated print and digital materials inform students about federal financial aid, payment plans, and institutional merit and need-based scholarships. The catalog provides current information on the cost of attendance and financial aid policies. Upon admittance, students receive this information via mail and email (AdmitWF) [339] and (FAFSA) [340].

Targeted Outreach: Using Radius, the College sends targeted messages to students early and often during the recruitment and admissions process. These messages direct students to the College's website and encourage them to contact financial aid representatives [339]. Text messages are also periodically sent regarding billing or financial aid (FAtexts) [341].

Workshops and Counseling: The Office of Financial Aid offers in-person and online workshops for students and families in both Spanish and English. Financial aid counselors are available on a walk-in basis or by appointment, and College staff support students through a live web chat tool or in-person appointments (FAFSAWSa) [342], (FAFSAWSb) [343].

Upon admission, students can access their personalized dashboard via the portal, which includes the Self-Service Financial Aid Module. This module provides current communication about received and missing financial aid documents and award details unique to each student (FAPortal) [344]. Advisors and counselors can use the Self-Service Financial Aid Counseling module to assist students in understanding their financial aid information. Tuition payments can be made in person or online through the secure portal, and payment



plans are also detailed as an option for students.

Refund information is posted online through the bursar and financial aid web pages and the online academic catalog under Enrollment Services [28 p397-425]. The catalog also provides additional information about state and federal financial aid programs, scholarships, loans, and other financial resources.

Additionally, Bergen has initiatives for students to realize cost-savings, such as incentivizing early registration by offering tuition at the 2019-20 rate if students registered before July 1, 2022. The College froze tuition rates during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years due to the pandemic. Bergen also offered the successful “Back on Track” (PR050222) [180] initiative to support students who were negatively impacted by the pandemic with free summer classes in 2022.

The Foundation (BCCFoun) [129] supports students from all socioeconomic backgrounds by providing scholarships and emergency financial assistance through programs like Bergen Cares Center (BCares) [142]. This program offers temporary, short-term financial help for tuition and books. Scholarship information is shared through the Student Finance and Financial Aid Self Service modules, the website, email, the Bergen Daily, and posts on TV monitors.

Financial Aid: Bergen has implemented multiple measures to assist students in understanding their options for paying for college and to support their financial literacy [340]. Key activities include financial aid entrance counseling, online resources, Financial Aid TV, and info sessions, and on-campus workshops.

Recent Improvements and Compliance: The past two years, 2022-2024, have been monumental in the evolution of the oversight of financial aid. Bergen redeveloped the Office of Financial Aid’s staffing, position descriptions, processes and procedures, and proposed a Census Roster Certification Policy. This restructuring also successfully advocated for removal of the “E” grade, a grading option that impacted financial aid compliance processes. Additionally, Bergen finalized a settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Education from an open Federal Program Review spanning 2012-2014.

In 2022, Bergen had an external consultant, Financial Aid Services (FAS), audit and assess financial aid business processes, resulting in 53 recommendations that were implemented across areas such as federal regulatory compliance, organizational structure and staffing, customer service, current business practices, and technology. In 2023, a file audit by FAS led to further improvements. In 2024, an Ellucian consultant reviewed and trained staff on multiple processes within the financial aid office. These audits and improvements have supported more compliant and streamlined processes for students, enhancing their overall experience and access to financial aid resources.

Further, the Office of Financial Aid in-sourced the federal verification process in June 2023, reversing an outsource decision made in 2018. All financial aid staff were trained in the verification process. Along with IT, the Office of Financial Aid developed and implemented all the verification forms needed for students to complete the process. Federal policies on Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), Return to Title IV (R2T4),

Figure 2. FAS Audit Overview

Area	Items	Complete	In Progress
Federal Regulatory Compliance	25	22	3
Organizational Structure/Staffing	5	5	0
Customer Service	5	3	2
Current Business Practices	6	4	2
Communications	5	5	0
Technology	7	4	3
Total	53	43	10

Table 7. Financial Aid Outcomes and Recommendations	
Category	Outcome Description
Pell Reconciliation	Resolved Pell reconciliation and student rejects within Colleague and COD.
Workflow Improvements	Reviewed daily processes and moved some into the process handler to improve workflow.
Direct Loan Reconciliation	Resolved direct loan reconciliation and student rejects within Colleague and COD.
Communication Management	Reviewed communications management and consolidated multiple daily correspondences.
State Roster Processing	Reviewed state roster import process to improve awarding and certification.
Student Communications	Developed improved emails and communications for students.
Awarding and Packaging	Developed new awarding and packaging rules.
SAP Workflow	Reviewed and updated the SAP process internal workflow.
Process Optimization	Reviewed custom processes and transitioned to Colleague-delivered solutions.

withdrawals, and verification were reviewed against internal College policies and revised to adhere with established federal guidelines. A processing and reconciliation calendar was developed for all financial aid programs to ensure deadlines were met. Mail and email communications to students were redeveloped to become process and award targeted. These were also streamlined to have less but more direct communication. Annual verification training continues for staff.

These efforts have resulted in more compliant and streamlined processes for students, significantly enhancing their overall experience and access to financial aid resources (FA2224) [346], (FAMar24) [347].

Criterion IV-1 (b): Placement and Support for Educational Goals

Working to Support Students with Varying Levels of Preparedness: Faculty, staff, and administrators prioritize student growth and delivering a college experience tailored to diverse needs and varying levels of academic preparedness. These efforts align with the College’s mission and strategies to offer accessible and transformative programs and services to a diverse community. Bergen strives to meet the evolving needs of its student population by providing educational programs and services that support the success of students with different abilities.

Testing Center: The Testing Center (Testing) [181] provides placement tests for new students, challenge tests, and bootcamps for students that want to improve their scores. In addition, proficiency testing (TestingP) [182] is available to enable students to advance levels more rapidly. The Testing Center also provides other key services including testing accommodations, in collaboration with OSS for students with documented disabilities. Testing offers an array of resources to support testing of students with visual or hearing impairments and ensures a distraction-reduced environment for all students. Placement testing is conducted via Accuplacer to evaluate skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, using the “Next Gen” Accuplacer test since 2020. Study guides and preparation materials (TestingSG) [183] are available on the website. Remote/online testing initiated during COVID-19 continues to be an option.

Multiple Measures for Course Placement: Responding to data on the efficacy of placement assessments, Bergen implemented multiple assessment measures starting in April 2020. High school transcripts are reviewed for GPA and coursework to aid in placement decisions. In addition, students may be exempt from placement testing with appropriate AP scores, SAT or ACT scores, or prior college credits.

Over the last five fall semesters, enrollment in developmental courses has comprised between 13.2 to 15.8 percent of total credits generated each term. Enrollment has consistently been highest in MAT courses relative to EBS and ESL courses. This enrollment trend continued in fall 2023; 2,260 students were enrolled in at least one remedial MAT course, compared to 1,784 in at least one remedial EBS course and 504 in at least one ALP course (FB23) [43].



On average, 61.6 percent of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students in the 2018-2020 cohorts were placed into at least one developmental course. When disaggregated by race and ethnicity, this data revealed significant disparities. Further analysis of the three-year graduation and transfer rates for these students showed that the gaps in success outcomes became even wider (DERates) [348]. Following the presentation of this data to key academic stakeholders, several changes were proposed and are currently being implemented. These include establishing standardized GPA criteria for multiple measures, introducing self-guided placement and additional testing options such as ALEKS, a web-based assessment using AI to help students determine their math placement and identify areas for improvement through a personalized, self-paced online prep and learning module, and adopting co-remediation best practice models in math and English, with additional support such as embedded tutors. Further details are provided in the narratives of Standards III and V.

Developmental Mathematics and Algebra: Bergen provides a variety of support services to students who have been placed in developmental courses. Students whose program requires a general education math course may choose the quantitative foundations pathway or a more advanced pathway. When a student's program requires college algebra, the student will follow the college algebra foundations pathway. When a student's program requires pre-calculus or higher, the student follows the calculus foundations pathway. Programs align mathematics courses with programs of study and progression to relevant college-level coursework. To reduce the time spent on developmental courses, the mathematics department offers winter and summer boot camps which provide students with intense tutoring and placement retesting opportunities for course advancement. Students can visit the CLAC or the Math Hub, where tutors are available to students needing additional help.

Developmental English Basic Skills (EBS): Bergen provides two developmental English pathways. Students may have one or two semesters of developmental requirements, with opportunities for rapid advancement. Faculty regularly reassess students through writing assignments to adjust placements if necessary.

Supplemental Instruction Center: SI is an academic support program that utilizes a peer-assisted study model. SI sessions are regularly scheduled, informal reviews in which students compare notes, discuss readings, develop organizational tools, and predict test items. The goals of SI include lowering attrition rates in targeted historically difficult courses, improving learning and student grades, and increasing student graduation rates. The SI program has offered 149 courses to students over the last three years. Between fall 2020 and 2024, there were a total of 10,724 visits and 3,264 sessions offered for a total of 2,060 unique students. To support students who need to build their English language skills, the American Language Program (ALP) provides coursework in English as a Second Language for multilingual students (SICenter) [349].

Student Success Seminar (IST 123): Bergen's three-credit course IST-123 helps students prepare for college success by teaching them to navigate support services, understand faculty expectations, and engage in academic planning. Students learn study skills, note-taking, time management, and explore career pathways.

Tutoring Services: The CLAC provides free academic support for Bergen students in over 250 courses, hosting over 30,000 visits annually. Further details are provided in the narrative of Standard III.

Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF): The EOF program, established by the New Jersey State Legislature in 1968, assists economically and educationally disadvantaged students in obtaining a college education. Eligibility for EOF is based on both economic and educational criteria. The EOF program offers financial aid guidance, academic advising, tutoring, remedial support, and mentoring for academic, personal, and social support. The program's vision focuses on fostering intellectual and leadership development through a supportive learning community, continuously adapting to meet students' needs. EOF seeks to maximize academic success through support services, financial assistance, and leadership development activities.

Criterion IV-1(c): Orientation, Advisement, and Counseling

To enhance retention and guide students throughout their educational journey, Bergen offers comprehensive orientation, advisement, and counseling programs. New students receive an enrollment checklist via mail and email, with prompts and reminders from Radius by Anthology to guide them through the process. Bergen's onboarding process provides a detailed roadmap for accessing services throughout their education. Bergen has 23 academic coaches, 14 academic counselors who see at risk students, and eight new student advisors.

New Student Orientation (NSO): Coordinated by the Office of Student Life, NSO introduces students to College services and resources, helping them connect with peers, student leaders, and staff. It offers a broad introduction to academic advising, student services, success strategies, and how to navigate the campus, preparing students for their college experience.

Following a decline in attendance in NSO during the pandemic, Bergen made a strategic decision to implement a new, in-person, NSO process separate from new student registration for fall 2022 with 586 students attending. In fall 2023, Bergen hosted six NSO events with over 1,000 students attending the on-campus orientations. Bergen also broke out NSO for smaller constituencies such as the Early College Orientation at the Meadowlands, which had approximately 40 students and the International Student Orientation, which had well over 100. Five hundred and thirty students assessed orientation via the new student experience app, and the College averaged nearly five out of five stars (Orient23) [350]. Bergen plans to expand the number of events to create a smaller more personal NSO experience for students where they can begin to make more connections with faculty, staff, advisors, and other students in a more intimate setting.

EOF Summer Program / Orientation: The EOF Summer Program is a state-funded initiative offered to first-time college students entering the EOF. It is an intensive pre-college preparatory academic program designed to give first-time students a head start on their college career. The summer program runs for six weeks. There is no cost associated in attending this program, as books for the summer program, lunch vouchers, and a weekly travel stipend are included. This past summer, 35 students attended. A separate orientation was held for parents. All but two students successfully completed the program and enrolled for fall 2024.

Office of Multicultural Services and Activities Summer Program: In summer 2023, Bergen launched the Office of Multicultural Services and Activities, starting with a summer leadership academy for 37 students. The academy supports students' academic, cultural, social, and professional growth through workshops, leadership training, and college-level courses. OMSA now offers a student lounge, upgraded facilities, and expanded programming to foster community, guidance, and support. OMSA is integral to student engagement and retention, hosting signature events such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, and Women's History Month, each recently resourced with a \$10,000 annual budget.

Center for Student Success (CSS): The Center for Student Success (CSS) provides academic and career advising for new and continuing students, career development, cooperative education, internships, transfer services, and work-study opportunities. New student advising, available in-person and virtually, helps students confirm their program of study, review placement results, and access the Student Planning platform. In 2023, the Testing Center was relocated closer to the One Stop to streamline onboarding. Career advising includes three workshops per semester for students in the Exploratory Studies Program. Bergen uses Self Service for advising, course planning, and registration, with updated video tutorials available online (CforSSVid) [184], (CforSS) [185].



A 2016 program review highlighted challenges in advising, prompting improvements in data usage, staffing, technology, and training (AdvPR) [351]. In 2019, part-time advisors were hired, and the One Stop was developed. A 2022 pilot program through the COL used proactive, caseload-based advising, with real-time progress tracking and interventions. This approach increased COL students' success rates by 24 percent compared to their peers (COLPil) [352]. Based on this success, Bergen expanded the initiative, hiring seven full-time advisors as part of an advising redesign supported by a Title V grant (AdvReD) [223], (TitV) [354].

The redesign introduced a caseload model, using CRM Advise to monitor student progress and foster proactive communication. Advisors and counselors are assigned based on academic programs, creating supportive communities. Specialized advising is available for EOF, veterans, athletes, COL, and early college students. Academic counseling is mandatory for students on probation or not meeting SAP requirements, focusing on retention and planning.

Career Development and Cooperative Education offers counseling, manages the cooperative education program for credit-bearing internships, and oversees Federal Work Study and on-campus employment. "Workforce Wednesdays" and bi-annual career fairs connect students with job opportunities, while Handshake provides free access to job postings and career resources (CSS23) [355].

Health, Wellness, and Personal Counseling Center: The Health, Wellness, and Personal Counseling Center is dedicated to supporting students' overall well-being through a range of services. These include free, confidential, short-term personal counseling with licensed professionals to address mental health and personal challenges, as well as health services like first aid, health screenings, and physician referrals to support physical health. The center also offers workshops and programs promoting holistic wellness, focusing on topics such as stress management, mental health awareness, and substance abuse prevention. Beyond regular services, the center ensures students have access to 24/7 support for urgent needs. After-hours assistance is available through Uwill crisis support and the 24/7 suicide and crisis lifeline, providing continuous care and resources when students need them most.

Additionally, the center manages the Bergen Cares Center food pantry and the Threads clothing closet, providing essential resources to students facing food insecurity and clothing needs. This holistic approach addresses both the physical and emotional aspects of student well-being, recognizing that meeting basic needs is crucial for academic success and personal development.

Office of Specialized Services, Turning Point, and The Center for Adult Transition: OSS fosters an inclusive environment by removing barriers and providing academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Services include priority registration, testing accommodations, sign language interpreters, note-taking, CART captioning, alternate-format materials, and assistive technology. OSS also offers support through academic and personal counseling, career guidance, faculty-student meetings, and training in advocacy and problem-solving skills. Faculty and staff provide professional development on disability-related topics and collaborate with families to promote student independence.

Bergen celebrates diversity and supports students of all abilities. The Turning Point Program, launched in 2012, is a vocational path for young adults with intellectual disabilities, graduating 130 students to date. In 2022, Bergen expanded services through the Center for Adult Transition, funded by the N.J. Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, to provide enhanced support for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, aiding their transition to education, employment, and independent living (TPCAT) [356].

Criterion IV-I(d): Achievement of Students' Educational Goals

Bergen offers a variety of resources to support students as they work to achieve their educational goals, including program completion, transfer, and career services.

Career Center: The Career Center equips students with the tools and resources needed to achieve their

educational and career goals through personalized career counseling, resume and cover letter assistance, and access to job and internship opportunities. The center utilizes Handshake, a leading career platform, to connect students with employers, job postings, and internship opportunities tailored to their interests and academic programs. Students can also benefit from workshops, career fairs, mock interviews, and career assessments to explore potential career paths and gain valuable professional skills. By fostering employer partnerships and providing comprehensive support, the Career Center ensures students are well-prepared to transition confidently from college to the workforce or further their education.

Enrollment Services: Representatives contact new and current students several times per year for registration efforts. Recent outreach targeting “stop-out” students to encourage re-enrollment, and outreach regarding newly launched online degree programs has begun. Students are encouraged to use self-service to monitor and create academic plans to achieve their educational goals.

Transfer Counseling: Bergen has a strong history of providing transfer support to students. Previously, transfer services were offered by staff outside of the Advising Center. While this process showed some success, the College integrated transfer services directly into the Advising Center to enhance the advising model. This change allows academic advisors to serve as the primary campus resource for transfer services, fostering a stronger connection between students and their advisors. Now, students can access both advising and transfer services in one location. Academic advisors continue to discuss transfer options with students, support their understanding of the transfer process, and assist with course selections to facilitate transfers. During the 2023 advising redesign, an advisor was hired to specifically coordinate and be the expert on transfer advising alongside an already established transfer counselor. Additionally, students are trained in utilizing NJ Transfer (NJTran) [357], which is a web site designed to facilitate the process of transferring courses from a community college to a four-year college or university. Students are referred to transfer resources, such as transfer counselors or on-site four-year partners. The CLAC’s Writing Center houses the College Transfer Essay Program, assisting students with writing the required transfer essays as well as completing supplemental questions asked in transfer admission packets.

On-Site Transfer Partners: Transfer partners are based in the One Stop during the fall and spring terms, offering academic planning, transfer guidance, instant decision days, application and financial aid support, and access to campus events. College fairs each semester further support the transfer process. Bergen maintains over 50 articulation agreements, updated regularly on its website, enabling seamless transitions, particularly within New Jersey’s higher education system, while supporting nationwide transfers.

Criterion IV-2: Evaluation and Acceptance of Transfer Credits and Prior Learning

The Office of Registration determines whether coursework completed at other institutions can be awarded credit. The transfer policy (Transfer) [186], available on the College’s website, provides students with information about requirements for course transfer, including individual course grades and GPA requirements. Transfer credit is awarded at Bergen within the context of state regulations, mandated policies, accreditation requirements, and institutional oversight.

Transfer and Alternative Credits: Bergen recognizes various sources of prior learning for college credit. These include Advanced Placement (AP) scores, College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) testing, International Baccalaureate (IB) credits, and international credit evaluations. Additionally, students can receive credit for military, police, EMT, and other professional training and evaluations.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA): Students may be awarded college credit for prior learning experiences from work, life, military, or other non-traditional sources. Those seeking credit for skills and knowledge gained outside the traditional classroom must contact the Office of Curriculum. Assessment of competency can be conducted for a variety of general education and program-specific courses. A maximum of 45 credits can be awarded toward an associate’s degree through traditional transfer, credit-by-exam, and PLA.



Proficiency Tests: The Testing Office offers proficiency tests in CHM 100 (Intro to Chemistry), MAT 160 (Intermediate Algebra), and MAT 180 (Precalculus). For a fee of \$45, students can take these tests, and if successful, are deemed proficient in the course content and waived from the respective courses.

High School Programs: Bergen has several thriving high school programs. Current high school students can earn college credits through the Early College Program, where they can work towards an associate degree while still in high school. Dual Enrollment allows students to take college courses at their high school, and the Bergen Experience invites high school students to take college courses on the Bergen campus.

Criterion IV-3: Maintenance and Security of Student Information and Records

Bergen’s student information is stored in Colleague systems, with access restricted to employees whose job responsibilities require it. The College’s FERPA Policy (FERPA) [187] defines directory information, appropriate school official access, and conditions for accessing student data without consent. Employees use secure login credentials and complete annual information training through HR. Registration manages student records and their release. In 2022, Bergen implemented Self-Service Proxy [187], allowing students to grant or revoke access to specific records like billing, financial, or grades.

ITS ensures secure use of College resources, supported by policies like the Cybersecurity Awareness Program (CyberAP) [188], Academic Computing Policy (AcaCP) [189], and Acceptable Use Policy (AcceptUP) [190]. The Office of Document and Records Management (DDRecord) [191] ensures compliance with record preservation and destruction laws, guided by the Records Retention Policy (GADM:006-001.2018) [192]. Multi-factor authentication (MFAuth) [193] was recently introduced, requiring an additional verification step for system access, enhancing data protection in an interconnected world.

Criterion IV-4: Extracurricular Activities and Campus Life

Athletics, student life, and other extracurricular activities at Bergen are regulated by the same academic, fiscal, and administrative principles and procedures that govern all other programs.

Administrative Principles and Procedures: All student activities, including athletics and student life, operate under the BOT policies and the Student Code of Conduct. These activities are managed through a clear administrative structure, with both the Director of Student Life and Development and the Director of Athletics reporting directly to the VPSA. This ensures consistency and adherence to institutional guidelines.

Student Life: The Office of Student Life (SLMission) [24] oversees co-curricular student involvement through clubs and organizations, leadership development programming, and numerous other initiatives. Each year, between 50 and 70 registered student organizations cover a wide range of social, academic, and cultural areas of interest. The SGA (SGAWeb) [194], a pillar of participatory and shared governance at the college, is directly overseen by Student Life. The Campus Groups platform, a student organization management tool, allows students to join clubs, register their clubs, manage rosters, submit event proposal forms, and promote events. This platform tracks co-curricular student engagement and provides data to measure impacts on retention and completion.

In addition to facilitating club and organization involvement, Student Life offers a variety of social and recreational programs to enhance students’ sense of belonging on campus, as well as leadership development programs and training. In 2022-2023, Student Life facilitated 183 student club/organization events and approximately 1,300 club meetings, along with 55 events hosted directly by the office. Additionally, Student Life provided logistical and financial support for 36 events hosted by other campus entities (SLRoster) [358].

Athletics: Bergen offers varsity intercollegiate athletics programs in men’s and women’s soccer, men’s and women’s cross country, women’s volleyball, men’s and women’s basketball, wrestling, baseball, softball, men’s and women’s track and field, and e-sports. Bergen is a division III (non-scholarship) member of the

Garden State Athletic Conference (GSAC) and Region XIX of the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). The Bergen Bulldogs (SportWeb) [195] are funded through student fees, complying with Title IX guidelines and applicable NJCAA regulations. Student athletes are required to speak to their course instructors about practices and any game travel requirements and must request each instructor to complete a progress report to ensure they are maintaining satisfactory academic progress and meeting NJCAA standards for academic eligibility.

Student Government and Clubs: The SGA is the voice of Bergen's students. The SGA serves as a link between the student body and the College administration. It oversees the administrative aspects of student clubs and organizations. SGA is committed to the concept of a democratic form to develop the academic, social, and cultural growth of the student body. Bergen's student clubs and organizations (StuClub) [196] cover a range of purposes and organizational types, including cultural, spiritual, service, academic, social, and artistic. Additional details regarding SGA can be found in Standard VII.

Criterion IV-5: Assessment of Third-Party Student Support Providers

To better understand and assess students and their experiences, Bergen uses third-party providers to support the student experience and conducts various surveys and assessments on them. The information from these surveys, along with their results, is housed in Student Affairs and CIE. This data informs decision-making processes regarding student experiences.

Financial Aid External Audits: In 2022, Bergen had FAS audit and assess its financial aid business processes. A detailed discussion appears earlier in this chapter.

EAB: Bergen has engaged with EAB to support initiatives such as DEI, enrollment and marketing, retention and data analytics. Initiatives include a virtual tour (Tour) [197] (Tourda) [364]. EAB has also hosted multiple webinars, shared many white papers, and engaged in key Bergen initiatives such as SEM, retention, DEI, and sharing best practices with the Bergen leadership team. The Cabinet has also met with EAB to engage in thought leadership activities that have direct impacts on the services provided and experiences of students.

TNG and ATIXA: Bergen partnered with TNG and ATIXA to assess and review many policies and procedures that directly impact students. In 2022, Bergen engaged TNG to conduct in-person multi-day best practices training for over 30 staff members on campus. These members of the staff are critical to the operations of the Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT). Further, in 2023 and 2024, TNG and ATIXA (a subsidiary of TNG) reviewed the College Title IX Policies and Procedures and Code of Student Conduct. Approved changes were made in March 2023 and August 2024 (BOTIX) [365], (BOTCon24) [366].

Virtual Mental Health Counseling (UWill): After hours crisis support, and free on-demand wellness programming are provided in partnership with UWill (UWill) [367]. A detailed discussion appears earlier in this chapter.

Follett Bookstore Assessment: Bergen has partnered with Follett to provide course textbooks and materials for students. Students can purchase textbooks and materials online and through the on-campus bookstore. In addition, Bergen recognizes that having textbooks available at the start of the term is critical to student success. To that end, the College has partnered with Follett to implement Follett Access, a course material solution that delivers materials to students on or before the first day of class through a course fee, built into tuition. This program ensures students receive course materials that they need to succeed more conveniently and makes them more affordable. Follett is also working with the facilities team to renovate the physical bookstore space to improve operations, services, and the student experience.

American Dining Creations (ADC): Based on feedback from students, faculty, and staff, Bergen embarked on a search for a new food vendor in 2022. A representative committee of faculty, staff, and students served on a committee to review the submissions. The selection process included written proposals, presentations, and

several tasting events. The committee unanimously selected ADC, which began transitioning into the space in 2023. Bergen recognizes that its students are commuters and may stay on campus the entire day. Accordingly, it remains important that they have access to healthy and inclusive food options.

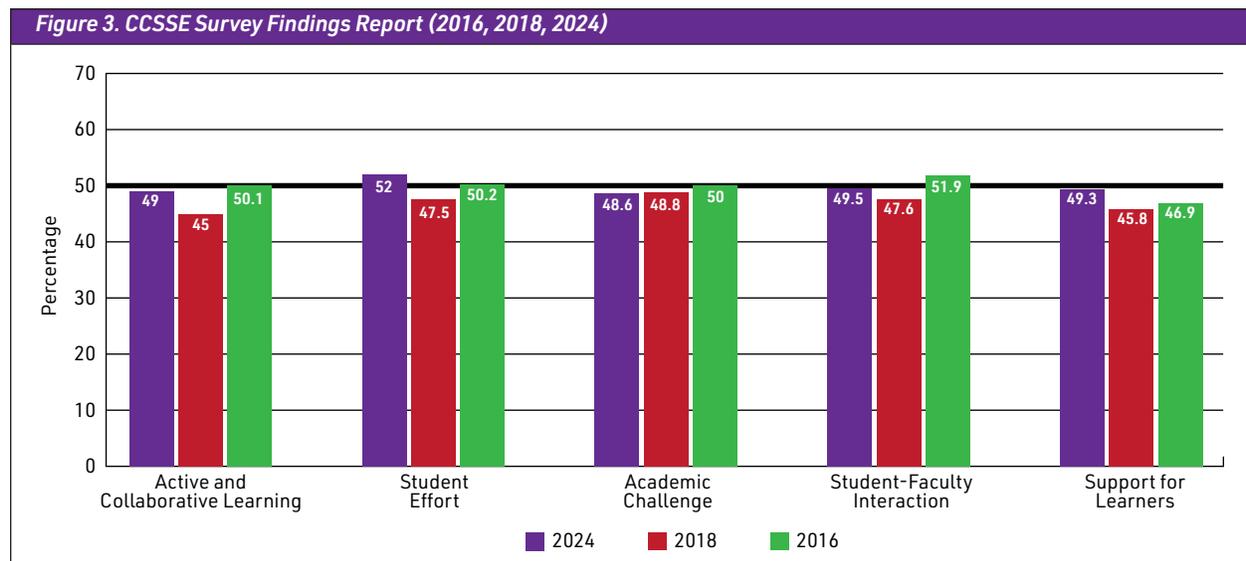
Shortly after ADC began, continuous informal feedback on the food and service from the new vendor was collected by writing suggestions on a whiteboard in the cafeteria, through small focus groups, and through email. A formal food service survey is coming soon. In a meeting with students at an off-site location, one informal suggestion was to pilot hot food vending machines at the Meadowlands campus. Bergen was recognized by ADC as one of the top sellers for hot food vending after its inception. ADC has committed to partner with Bergen to redesign the dining and food prep space on campus to make it more comfortable and accessible to students. In addition, ADC has donated funds and gift cards to the Bergen Cares Center food pantry and supports students through scholarships.

Ad Astra HESI Assessment: In 2023, Bergen partnered with Ad Astra to evaluate and assess its scheduling practices through a Higher Education Scheduling Index (HESI®) analysis (AstraHESI) [368]. Findings were shared with campus stakeholders, leading to discussions on key issues (FSSche24) [369], (FS041624) [370], (FS020624) [371].

The redesigned scheduling process, launched in fall 2024 (AstraSche) [372], included staff training and the creation of a Scheduling Task Force to support ongoing improvements. Bergen now uses historical and predictive data to plan sections, monitors course fill rates to maximize efficiency, opens new sections based on demand, adheres to a standardized grid to avoid scheduling conflicts, and carefully manages online section offerings. Bergen is transitioning to a yearlong scheduling model, supported by standardized processes and a “15 to Graduate” campaign to promote completion and degree velocity. Efforts with developmental education aim to reduce credits-to-degree and time-to-degree.

Campus Climate Survey on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: In spring 2022, Bergen contracted with Insight-Viewfinder Campus Climate Surveys to gather perceptions about the campus culture (ClimateS23) [37]. A detailed discussion appears in Standard II.

CCSSE Survey: The CCSSE assesses student engagement through institutional practices and student behavior. This survey was last administered in 2024. Key findings from 2024 highlight aspects of highest and lowest student engagement and include benchmark comparisons. Five benchmarks of effective educational practice were measured (CCSSE24FC) [463]:



Criterion IV-6: Assessment of Student Support Programs

Bergen engages in periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs supporting the student experience to ensure alignment with the College's mission and strategic goals. CIE conducts annual surveys and monitors core indicators related to student experiences and results, which are contained within the CIE Annual Report. The College regularly assesses the engagement and effectiveness of its support services as part of Bergen's Administrative and Educational Support Assessment (CIEAES) [199] and Assessment of Student Learning (CIEYR23) [210].

Bergen provides a variety of programs designed to enhance the student experience. Feedback gathered from students through various surveys demonstrates strong levels of satisfaction with the College's support services. This feedback is crucial for understanding students' perceptions of services and informing decisions regarding program improvements.

Historically, Bergen's system of assessment of co-curricular activities and support services related to the student learning experience and ultimately student success has been decentralized. Each area, under the direction of their respective reporting division, holds responsibility for assessment and uses various types of assessment data, including student utilization data and surveys that measure student satisfaction and perception. During the height of the pandemic, assessment and long-term planning in student affairs were slowed and, in some cases, interrupted. Most surveys were paused during this time or resulted in likely unreliable data. Recently, however, standardization of unit-level assessments within student affairs has started with a template that reflects the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) standards as appropriate for each department. Assessment is now being woven into all activities and events within the division.

Student Affairs Assessment Redesign: The 2024 Student Affairs Assessment Template (StuAAT) [201] provides a structured approach to track student service usage, identify needs, evaluate satisfaction, and assess experiences across student groups. Departments submit end-of-year reports, including mission, staffing, goals, key performance indicators, longitudinal data (recruitment, retention, transfer, graduation), accomplishments, survey results, and future goals.

The Student Affairs Assessment Plan (SAAAssess) [373] follows Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education guidelines, detailing an assessment cycle, timeline, tools, and responsible staff. It includes guiding questions to ensure evidence informs decisions and defines long-term goals and objectives for student affairs.

New Student Survey: To learn more about new students, Institutional Effectiveness created a New Student Survey, last conducted in fall 2022 (NSSurv) [374].

Graduate Follow-Up Survey: The Graduate Follow-Up Survey (StuGradSGFU) [202] assesses how well the College's programs, facilities, and services have enabled students to achieve their personal, educational, and professional goals.

Graduate Transfer Experience Report: This report presents data from graduates who transferred to a four-year institution.

Pizza with the President: Student Life and SGA host "Pizza with the President" twice per semester and invite students to enjoy a meal with the President and Cabinet. Students have the focused opportunity to express any feedback or concerns directly to the senior executive team and learn more about the initiatives that support their success.

Welcoming Campus Environment Furniture Initiative: Bergen prioritized belongingness and inclusion by addressing a lack of comfortable seating on campus. Using over \$1 million in federal pandemic relief funds, the College added a significant amount of furniture to hallways, common areas, and informal meeting spots



based on student feedback and social distancing priorities. This investment created a more welcoming and functional environment, enhancing student experience. Students have responded positively, enjoying revitalized spaces for relaxation, connection, and productivity.

SGA Monthly Meeting with President and Vice President of Student Affairs: The President and VPSA host monthly meetings with the SGA Executive Board. The agenda is set by SGA and many key topics are discussed and addressed. In recent years, key initiatives resulting from these meetings included supplying free feminine hygiene products for students, remodeling the SGA office into a more welcoming and accessible student space, and a variety of food and clothing drives to support students (SGAProj23) [204].

Standard IV Conclusion

Bergen's comprehensive array of services clearly meets the MSCHE Standard IV criteria and Requirements of Affiliation 8 and 10. The College provides extensive support for all students, including those from diverse academic backgrounds, traditional and non-traditional ages, and various cultural backgrounds. This broad spectrum of services reflects the diverse and vibrant student population, ensuring that every student has access to the resources needed for success.

The institution systematically evaluates its educational programs and other initiatives, making public how well it is accomplishing its purposes. This is demonstrated through various assessments, surveys, and audits conducted across all departments, ensuring transparency and accountability. For instance, CIE conducts annual surveys and monitors core indicators related to student experiences and outcomes. Additionally, the Office of Financial Aid has undergone multiple audits to enhance compliance and streamline processes, directly improving student access to financial resources.

Institutional planning at Bergen is deeply integrated with goals for academic and institutional effectiveness and improvement. The College emphasizes student achievement of educational goals, student learning, and the results of academic and institutional assessments. This commitment is evident in the SEM Plan, which aligns with the AMP and is continuously updated to reflect current priorities and needs. The SEM Plan's strategic and data-driven approach has contributed to reversing a decade-long enrollment decline and improving graduation rates.

Institutional Strengths

1. Bergen excels in providing a wide range of support services tailored to meet the needs of its diverse student body. From academic advising, tutoring, and career services to financial aid and personal counseling, the College ensures all students receive the support needed to achieve their educational goals.
2. The College demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusivity and equity through initiatives such as the Office of Multicultural Services and Activities, which provides programming and support for students from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, EOF and other programs are specifically designed to support economically and educationally disadvantaged students.
3. Bergen systematically evaluates its programs and services through a robust framework of assessments, audits, and surveys. This approach ensures that the College not only meets but exceeds its goals for student success and institutional effectiveness.
4. Bergen maintains strong relationships with local high schools, businesses, and community organizations, fostering a seamless transition for students into higher education and the workforce. Initiatives like the Early College Program and various community events highlight the College's commitment to serving its community.

Institutional Opportunities

1. The College should continue to provide resources to support a comprehensive retention strategy that targets at-risk students and improves overall retention rates.
2. The College should expand its investment in technology and infrastructure to support its growing student body and evolving educational programs.



Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

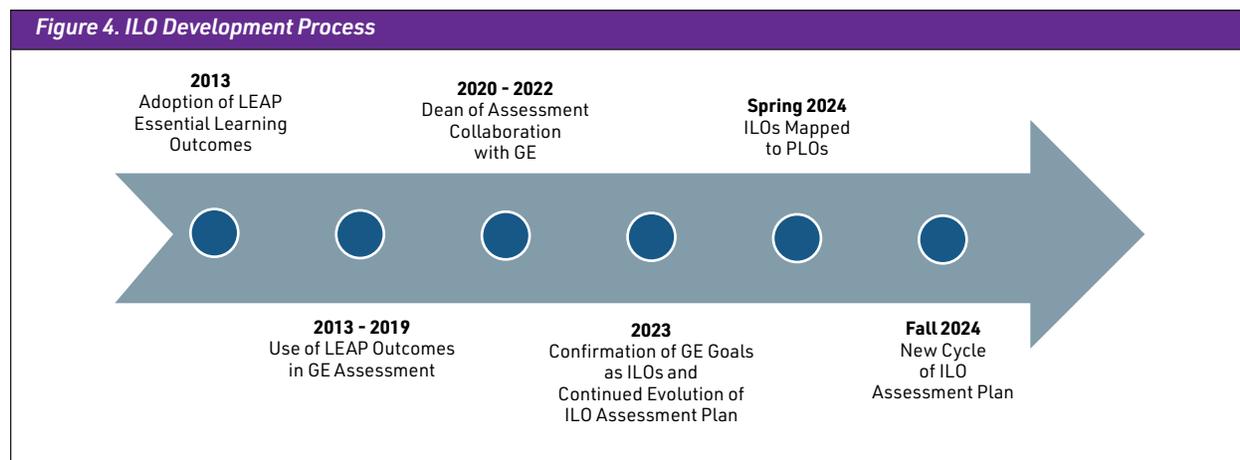
Bergen is committed to achieving its mission to provide “accessible and transformative programs and services to its diverse community” (Mission) [1]. Assessment and evaluation efforts play a critical role in supporting this mission-centric commitment. Furthermore, the College employs assessment outcomes to clarify relevance, refine processes, and strengthen relationships between institutional and program learning outcomes. Bergen’s assessment framework, processes, and support system ensure that the assessment of student learning and achievement is deliberate, consistently organized, and systematic. The results of these assessment activities are used to inform continuous improvement related to educational effectiveness. The College assesses the assessment processes and utilizes its findings to refine and improve student learning assessment practices and procedures.

Criterion V-I: Interrelated and Relevant Educational Goals

In line with Bergen’s mission as a comprehensive community college, its Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are clearly articulated as the College’s GE Goals (FSMin121923) [205]. Each degree program has a foundation of at least 20 credits of GE courses; thus, the learning outcomes of the GE program remain institution-wide and an essential part of the fabric of all degree programs, whether transfer or professional as shown on the College’s curriculum maps (CIECurrM) [211].

This College’s framework for assessment of GE prior to 2023 had been developed in 2013 using the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) Outcomes, in conjunction with the state-sanctioned General Education Goals (NJFound22) [175]. In that framework, there was no formal mapping of these goals to either course-level Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) or Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs).

In 2022, Bergen began to revise the GE Program as “Essential Learning.” Subsequently, the GE goals were formally designated as the College’s “Essential Learning Outcomes” (ELOs) in 2023 and adopted as ILOs. In spring 2024, the wording of each goal went through a process of reformulation and refinement to prepare them for use as ILOs for assessment of student learning.



This identification of GE goals and ILOs was the culminating recommendation of a Faculty Senate task force that began meeting in April 2023 and sought college-wide input on this recommendation during September and October 2023. It was formally approved by the Faculty Senate in December 2023 [205].

With the ILOs approved in December 2023, each degree program and program option began to map its PLOs to these institutional goals to make the interrelationships between them transparent. This allows the College to include courses outside of the General Education program in its evolving ILO assessment process. These new curriculum maps are collected on a Google Drive to which all faculty leaders have access. The new maps

complement the existing ones on the CIE webpages [211], done in 2022, which relate PLOs to the discipline-specific courses offered within the program. An important distinguishing feature of these recent maps is a column for recording the specific assessments that underwrite the alignments of PLOs with ELOs.

In 2022, Canvas was chosen as the College's new LMS. The College configured Canvas to establish and link "Outcomes" at the course, program, and institutional level to course-level assignments. Because Canvas assessment reports link outcomes data to student ID numbers, the College's ability to collect, report, and use assessment data at all levels is greatly enhanced. The College moved from a system where disaggregation was difficult to obtain, to one that allows data to be aggregated and disaggregated by student populations. All courses converted to Canvas by fall 2023 were ready for piloting in June 2024. The choice of Canvas and its Outcomes configuration is a major asset in achieving the goals in the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan (Strategic24) [2], specifically the goals in Strategic Theme 2 (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belongingness) and Strategic Theme 4 (Innovation). The College is grateful to the County of Bergen for its strong and consistent partnership and its willingness to fund this high-quality platform.

Criterion V-2: Organized and Systematic Assessment

As an introductory statement, Bergen's assessment and program review processes support the intentional examination of programs, assignments, curricula, teaching methods, and student learning experiences. These processes are collaborative endeavors through which faculty use their expertise and knowledge of their program's strengths and limitations to inform continuous improvements in the teaching and learning experience offered to students. Assessment and program review help ensure the currency of Bergen's programs in meeting the academic needs of students and are important components of the College's institutional effectiveness efforts.

Institutional Support for Assessment: Over the last five years, the College has intentionally sought to improve its assessment framework and the organizational structure that supports its assessment efforts. In 2019, with changes in administrative leadership, Bergen began an overhaul of its assessment framework, with the administrative responsibility of the program review process shifting from the VPAA to CIE.

Figure 5: Assessment at Bergen, Administrative Responsibility

Assessment	Before 2019	After 2019
ILO	New (2023-2024)	GE Committee
GE	GE Committee	GE Committee
PLO	CIE	CIE
Program Review	VPAA	CIE

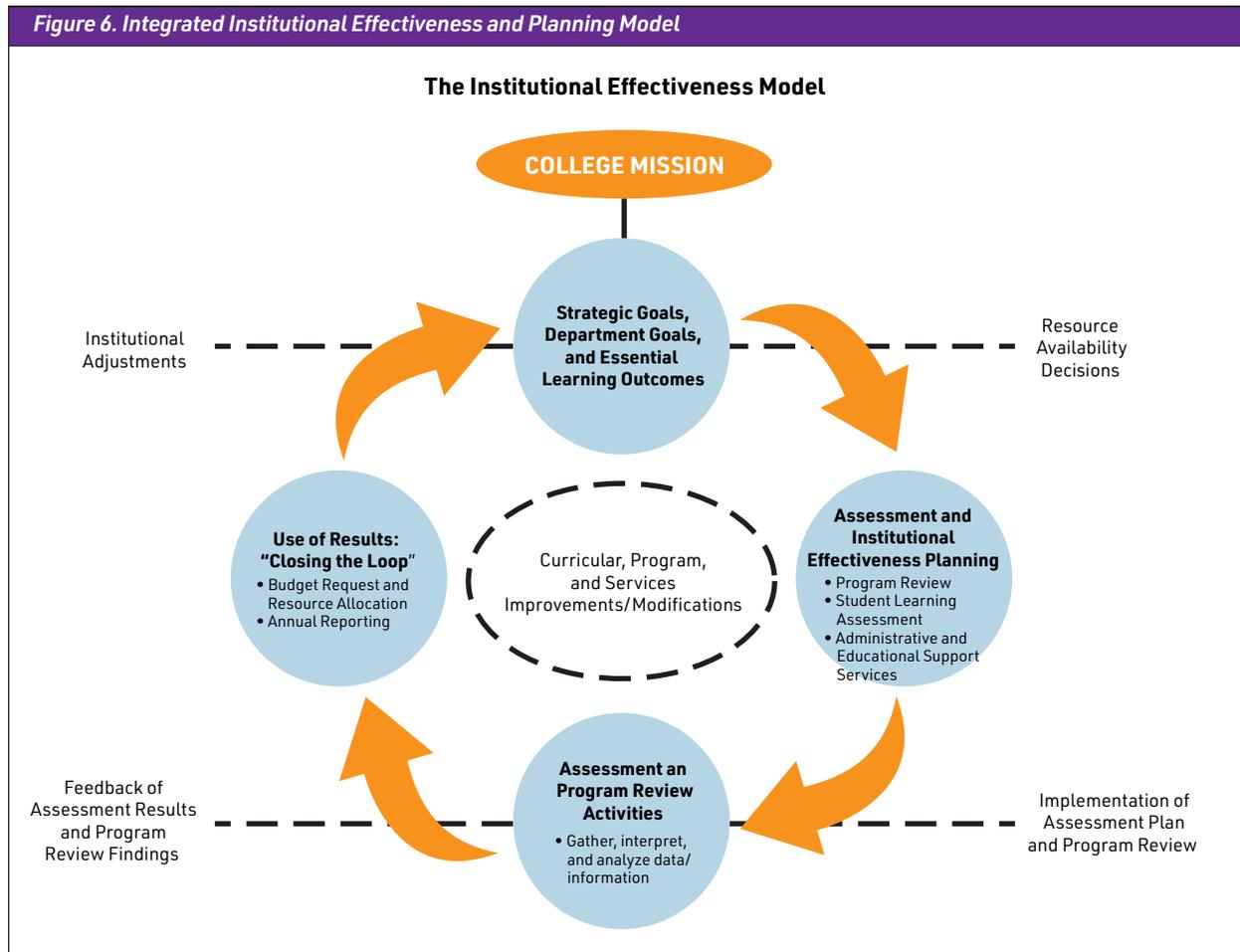
Upon the resignation of the former Dean of Assessment, Accreditation, and Compliance, the Managing Director of Institutional Research was appointed to the role of Dean of RIE in spring 2022. Purposively and strategically, this position was later elevated to the Cabinet. Currently, this dean leads CIE's work and is supported by an Associate Director of Institutional Effectiveness, a Research and Operations Assistant, Assessment Liaisons, Assessment Fellows, and administrators who designate their offices as support offices. See Criterion V-2(c) and Chapter One of the Assessment Handbook (AssessH24) [375] for more on the role of the Assessment Liaisons and Assessment Fellows.

During the pandemic, certain attempts to address other changes to the framework were delayed while the College pivoted to online instruction, curtailing aspects of student learning assessment activities. As the College emerged from the pandemic, academic departments submitted reports on the academic year 2020-2021 Curricular Actions/Closing the Loop (ClosingL20) [207]. Some departments reported on the ways students responded to remote learning, while others reported on the outcomes and implementation of assessment studies conducted in the previous cycle. For example, the Wellness and Exercise Science Department reported on an assessment of the skills necessary for cardiac and respiratory-related emergency

performance. The students' CPR and AED skills were assessed based on successfully completing seven of nine skill areas. With 15 of 18 students scoring a nine out of nine on the skills assessment, these results, along with the standards set forth by the American Heart Association, led to a revision in the course where the assessment occurred. Specifically, that revision was the addition of the certifying agency to help graduates meet industry requirements.

Beginning in spring 2022, steps to revamp the assessment practices hastened. The Dean of RIE led efforts to improve and implement the assessment framework, the assessment and program review cycle, and the related support network. Responding to recommendations from a 2019 external evaluator report (CIEAExt) [453], CIE reviewed its mission and core responsibilities (CIECoreM) [454]. The review led to a revised list of core responsibilities that better integrates planning, assessment, and institutional research. Furthermore, it highlighted the need for the adaptation of an institutional effectiveness model that captures the relationship between the core functions of CIE and the College. With a focus on ensuring academic assessment leads to educational effectiveness, a new model, Figure 6, was developed in 2023-2024. This model presents how the alignment of planning, resource allocation, assessment, and institutional adjustments are integral in realizing the College's mission and highlights assessment and program review in an institutional context of institutional renewal through curricula improvements.

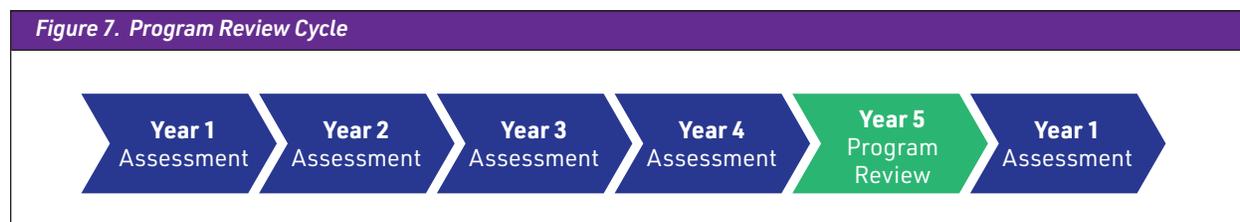
The new model was developed with input from the LAC, a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, established in 2011 to provide guidance and oversight on the processes for assessing student learning outcomes and to advise on college-wide policy and best practices in learning assessment (FSCConst23) [20]. See Criterion 2(c) for more on LAC.



Within the academic departments, Assessment Liaisons facilitate, coordinate, and collaborate with the department’s faculty to ensure a program learning outcomes assessment plan is developed and completed according to the program review and assessment schedule (AssessCy) [376]. These Assessment Liaisons are supported by Assessment Fellows, who are faculty members with expertise in learning outcomes assessment. These CIE affiliates offer guidance and other support to assessment liaisons and are instrumental in coordinating, developing, and maintaining the assessment and program review processes.

Over the years, the Dean of RIE has collaborated with the VPAA and the academic deans to strengthen assessment procedures and practices, disseminate information, provide updates, and support departments throughout the assessment and program review processes. This collaboration has helped to solidify the integral role the VPAA, academic deans, and department chairs play within the assessment framework [375].

Efforts to renew the assessment processes after the pandemic also included the review and modification of the assessment and program cycles and templates (AssessT) [377], (ProRevHan) [156]. These revisions honored the old process for continuity and strengthened the alignment with the new Middle States standards. Further, accommodating the recommendations from the last self-study, the revised process, which was launched in the fall of 2022, improves the alignment between the assessment of student learning and program review, creating a more integrated cycle. The new cycle consists of four one-year cycles of assessment, leading to a program review in the fifth year (FCCIE23) [379]; (CIEFacC) [455].



A new assessment form was created to complement the revised processes. This form incorporates the elements of the old form that was used for the 2-year assessment cycle, including a section for “Closing the Loop,” which requires consideration of what was done in the last assessment cycle. This new assessment template also clearly aligns program learning outcomes and course learning outcomes [377].

Similarly, a new program review template was also created. This template introduces consistency into the review process and addresses key features of the programs, options, or certificates. See the section on Cyclical Program Review in this chapter for additional details.

By way of continuous improvement, in 2022, CIE partnered with ITS to convert the assessment form (Word) to Laserfiche, enhancing the processing and monitoring of the assessment cycle [377]. This platform is also used across the institution to manage workflow and collect, route, organize, and archive forms and documents. The transition to Laserfiche allowed CIE to alleviate confusion about the currency of the assessment form, backlogs in processing, and questions about the sequencing of approvals. For similar reasons, a Laserfiche form was developed to process and archive program review reports, beginning with the 2023-2024 cycle [156].

Criterion V-2(a): Evaluation of Curricular Goals and Standards

The assessment of student learning determines to what extent students acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies the College expects of them as they progress through the courses in their programs. These courses and program learning goals are published in the College Catalog (Catalog23) [28] and in course syllabi (SylC) [380]. As its constitution outlines, the Faculty Senate is the representative governing body that formulates resolutions and recommendations and participates in decision-making on all academic and student affairs matters. The Senate Course Auditor and the Curriculum Committee (a standing committee of



the Faculty Senate) review curriculum proposals and curriculum-related matters, including student learning outcomes, for consistency with the philosophy and objectives of the College and to meet the needs of the students [20]. The Office of Curriculum supports the work and plays a key role in all phases of developing and modifying curricula and syllabi. The office assists in implementing curricular changes as determined by assessment results and program review (CurrHb) [381].

Curricular goals are defined at the program level and are articulated in curriculum maps, which show the alignment of PLOs with courses [211].

Assessment of Student Learning: Faculty assess students' learning in their classes as part of the teaching process. Assessment and evaluation of student learning, as it relates to mastery of program outcomes and student learning outcomes, provides information about students' knowledge and skills from participation in the academic program or being in a specific course. Methods used for assessment, such as exams, papers, demonstrations, and assignments, provide a medium to evaluate the knowledge and skills that result from students meeting course requirements. During the formal outcomes assessment process, faculty reflect on what works well and what does not, then use this information to make changes to improve the student experience. Those assessment processes are described in the following sections.

General Education Assessment: In 2013, Bergen adopted a new assessment model in which three goals were chosen each year to be assessed. Full-time and adjunct faculty in all disciplines were invited by email to submit student artifacts from one unmarked assignment that they believed contained evidence of students' learning concerning one or more of these goals. Over the years, the implementation of this model was met with challenges: low faculty participation, and in some cases, assignment requirements and faculty expectations were often uneven – making the findings unusable. In 2020-2021, this assessment process was suspended to consider alternative models that could yield better results. As noted in Criterion I, Bergen initiated the process of revising and rebranding the GE Program as "Essential Learning" in 2022 (GEOut) [384]. A vision for the assessment of GE also emerged, and a new process was developed (LEAP24) [383].

The assessment of GE learning outcomes complements and integrates with the existing and ongoing student learning assessment plan administered by CIE. This assessment model relies on the practice of using rubrics to assess that learning has occurred in online and in-person classes. With the implementation of Canvas as the College's new LMS, the GE Committee, with support from CIE and CITL, is leveraging the platform's assessment modules to manage the assessment of the GE learning outcomes. This framework (GEFrame) [382] relies on the considerable curriculum alignment, data collection, and reporting power of Canvas to improve the way assessment plans are developed and completed. The results are then analyzed, disaggregated, and shared with the appropriate department(s) and the College community. For example, in keeping with Bergen's commitment to DEIB, this assessment framework allows the outcomes data linked to student ID numbers to be disaggregated by student characteristics. This linkage allows for the analysis and examination of the outcomes of special populations, including students who have earned 45 or more credits - a long-standing goal of understanding what graduating students know and can do.

Consistent with the assessment schedule in Table 5, a pilot of this assessment process occurred in summer 2024, with an expanded implementation in fall 2024. This pilot focused on training faculty to use the relevant Canvas tools and provisioning outcomes extracted from Canvas to match data from the College's student information systems to facilitate the disaggregation of these outcomes by student demographic characteristics.

In addition to its stated goals, this pilot also introduced the development and use of “signature assignments,” including traditional analytical essays, video presentations, and final exam questions, that align with the learning outcome being assessed. The pilot faculty also tested the use of rubrics within Canvas. After the assessments were completed, the outcome scores and other student information captured in Canvas were extracted and matched with student demographic data, enabling the analysis and disaggregation of the outcomes (SummerP) [385].

Table 8: General Education Assessment Schedule

Timeframe	Year One (2024-25)	Year Two (2025-2026)	Year Three (2026-2027)	Year Four (2027-2028)
Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) Assessed	1. Humanistic Analysis 2. Effective Writing 3. Scientific Reasoning	4. Social-Behavioral Analysis 5. Mathematical Reasoning 6. Historical Analysis	7. Intercultural Awareness 8. Moral Literacy	9. Effective Speaking 10. Technological Competency 11. Information Literacy

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) Assessment: Before spring 2022, Bergen used a two-year assessment cycle with academic programs assessing PLOs within a four-semester cycle (CIEPre) [456]. To optimize this work to be a more effective process, Bergen moved to a one-year assessment cycle, a shift designed to ensure all program learning outcomes (PLOs) are assessed and addresses the concepts of closing the loop and using the assessment findings to improve programs. As part of the assessment process, departments, supported by the assessment liaison, reflect and report on the findings of prior assessment activities, the lessons learned, and the changes made. They identify the program-specific learning outcome(s) to be assessed and the course in which the assessment occurs. This selection should be based on faculty/departmental deliberation and consensus. In building the assessment plan, the liaison and peers identify the appropriate assessment methods that align with that outcome(s) and decide on a target outcome(s). The results of the assessment project document whether the stated target was met and the related implications.

Academic departments are expected to participate in assessment activities outlined in the published Assessment and Program Review schedule [386]. As the departmental leader of the assessment process, assessment liaisons attend the annual kick-off meeting hosted by CIE, during which this process is discussed and supporting materials shared.

In the 2022-2023 cycle, 32 assessment projects were initiated, with 25 completed. Across these 25 projects, 48 PLOs were assessed [386]. For example, in 2022-2023, the faculty teaching in the Social Work Program Option assessed one PLO, *Understand the nature of human systems: individual, groups, organization, community and society, and their major interactions, and how these systems interact in producing human problems*, in all sections of SOC-104. The students were asked to write an essay applying the social work ecological model of human systems as it pertains to explaining why sexual violence increased during the pandemic. The essay was scored on three categories using a four-point rubric. The results of the assessment show that 20 students out of 26 (80.8 percent) met the requirement (8.4) to pass. The faculty noted that emphasis should be placed on improving writing skills (one of the three categories assessed) in Social Work and recommended including “readings on writing skills for social workers in the curriculum.” Also, in 2022-2023, ESL program faculty assessed two PLOs: *Produce Clear, well-structured, detailed written texts* and *Demonstrate in writing effective use of English Grammar* in all sections of ALP-063. An essay on the final exam was assessed using a rubric, and an error analysis was conducted with a focus on Language Control. The analysis of the weakest tests shows problems with sentence structure (e.g., correct use of clauses, run-on sentences, and fragments), weak or absent use of clauses or transitions within and between paragraphs, and the presence of numerous grammatical control errors (pronouns, word forms, and agreements). Two notable recommendations from this study are: “language control and underdeveloped content should be addressed in the writing courses” and “more emphasis is needed on editing for grammatical correctness as part of the

writing process.” See the Assessment Summary for more details and a collection of all the assessment reports from the 2022-2023 cycle [386].

Cyclical Program Review: The program review process serves as an opportunity to conduct a periodic evaluation of how well an academic program, program option, or certificate accomplishes its stated purpose and addresses students’ needs. This process allows the program under review to showcase and celebrate achievements and successes and identify opportunities for improvement. Academic programs are reviewed every five years, consistent with the College’s published assessment and program review schedule [376]. Deans, department chairs, and designated faculty members attend the aforementioned kick-off meeting hosted by CIE to discuss the process and share resource materials.

The program review process is led by a chair or two co-chairs from the academic department supported by a committee of peers, who assist with collecting and reviewing information and completing the final report. This comprehensive review also includes an external evaluation, offering an objective examination of the program. The external reviewer completes a report, which is included as part of the final program review report. This final report includes a list of recommendations based on the internal and external review process and an action plan that outlines the steps needed to improve the program.

The review of program options is an abbreviated process that includes completing a Program Option Report. This Option Report is considered as part of the comprehensive program review of the program with which these options are affiliated. Like the Program Review report, the Program Option Report is expected to include a list of recommendations and an action plan that outlines the steps needed to improve the program option(s) considered [375].

In the 2022-2023 cycle, four program review reports and seven option reports were completed, including reviews of 15 of the College’s academic offerings. See Table 9 for a breakdown of the types of programs reviewed in the last two cycles. As of the 2024-2024 Cycle, 25 programs, program options, and certificates are slated to go through the review process.

Table 9. 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 Completed Program Review by Type

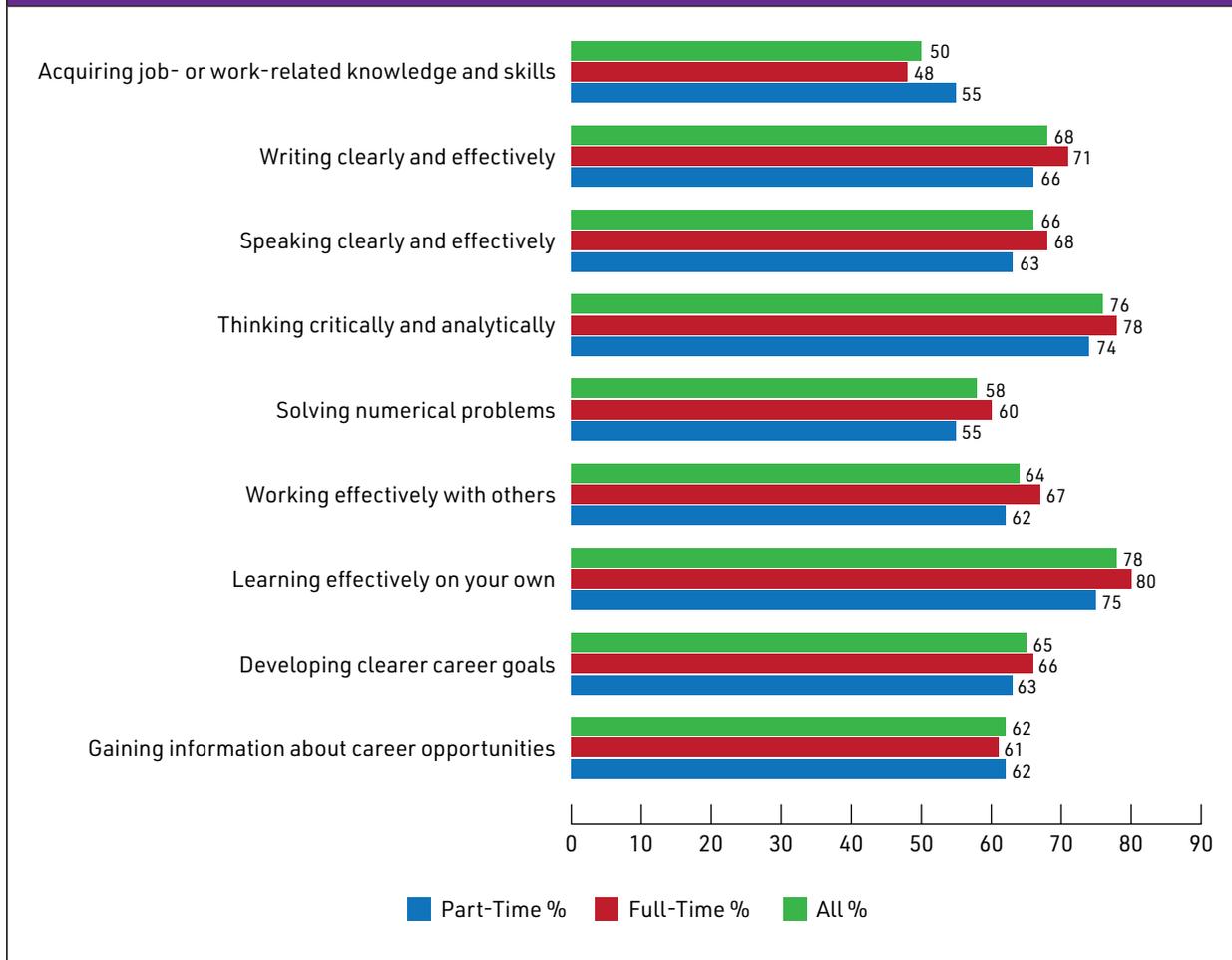
Program Type	Number Completed	
	2022-2023	2023-2024
Associate of Arts (A.A.)	4	4
Associate of Science (A.S.)	3	3
Associate of Fine Arts (A.F.A.)	1	0
Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.)	5	2
Certificate (CERT.)	0	1
Certificate of Achievement (C.O.A.)	2	1
Total	15	11

For examples of these reports, see the Fashion Design Program Review and Philosophy Option Report (2023-2024) (FDPOR)[387].

Criterion V-2(b): Preparing Students to Achieve Their Goals

Aligned with its vision as “an institution recognized for its ability to meet the needs of an ever-changing student population in a landscape of evolving employers’ workforce needs,” the College prepares students to enter the workforce and/or transfer to four-year colleges, making their education a springboard toward meaningful careers and successful academic experiences [1].

Figure 8. 2024 CCSSE Item 11- How much has your experience at this college contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development?



The College utilizes CCSSE to assess students’ experience and evaluate programs and services. From the 2024 administration of the CCSSE, students provided valuable insights on how much their experience at the College has contributed to their “*knowledge, skills and personal development.*” These results show that overall, students feel the College has helped to improve their skills and knowledge, especially their ability to learn effectively on their own (78 percent), think critically and analytically (76 percent), and write clearly and effectively (68 percent). According to Figure 8, the disaggregation of these results by enrollment status supports this finding, with full-time students reporting notable improvements in their development.

One method by which Bergen assesses its effectiveness is to survey its graduates one year after they have completed their course of study at the institution. The primary objective of this survey is to assess the extent to which students feel the College’s programs, facilities, and services have enabled them to achieve their personal, educational, and professional goals. See Table 10 for graduates’ achievements of personal, educational, and professional goals (GFUData) [470].

Table 10. Graduate Achievements (Class of 2019 - Class of 2022)

Goal Achievement	Class of 2022	Class of 2021	Class of 2020	Class of 2019
Achieved Primary Objective at Bergen	95%	94%	93%	92%
Transferred	89%	85%	83%	82%
Employed	81%	92%	77%	87%
Job Related to Program of Study	83%	91%	79%	90%

Success at Bergen takes many forms and is manifested in student and graduate stories. Two recent examples include:

1. The College’s 2022 valedictorian is in her 2nd year at the University of Pennsylvania and is graduating a semester early with a 4.0 GPA. After graduation from Bergen, she was promoted from the position of teacher’s aide to director of a program at Bergen County Special Services (BCSS). She attributes her success to Bergen and now serves as an informal liaison between the College and BCSS.
2. A 2021 Bergen graduate transferred to Montclair State University, graduated, and now attends Howard University’s graduate program in social work. When she began at Bergen, she was residing in a hotel with her five children. Relying on multiple wrap-around services during her time at the College, this single mom can continue to pursue her academic dreams while working towards a viable income to support her family.

These examples and survey results confirm the College’s effectiveness in preparing students for successful careers, meaningful lives, and further education.

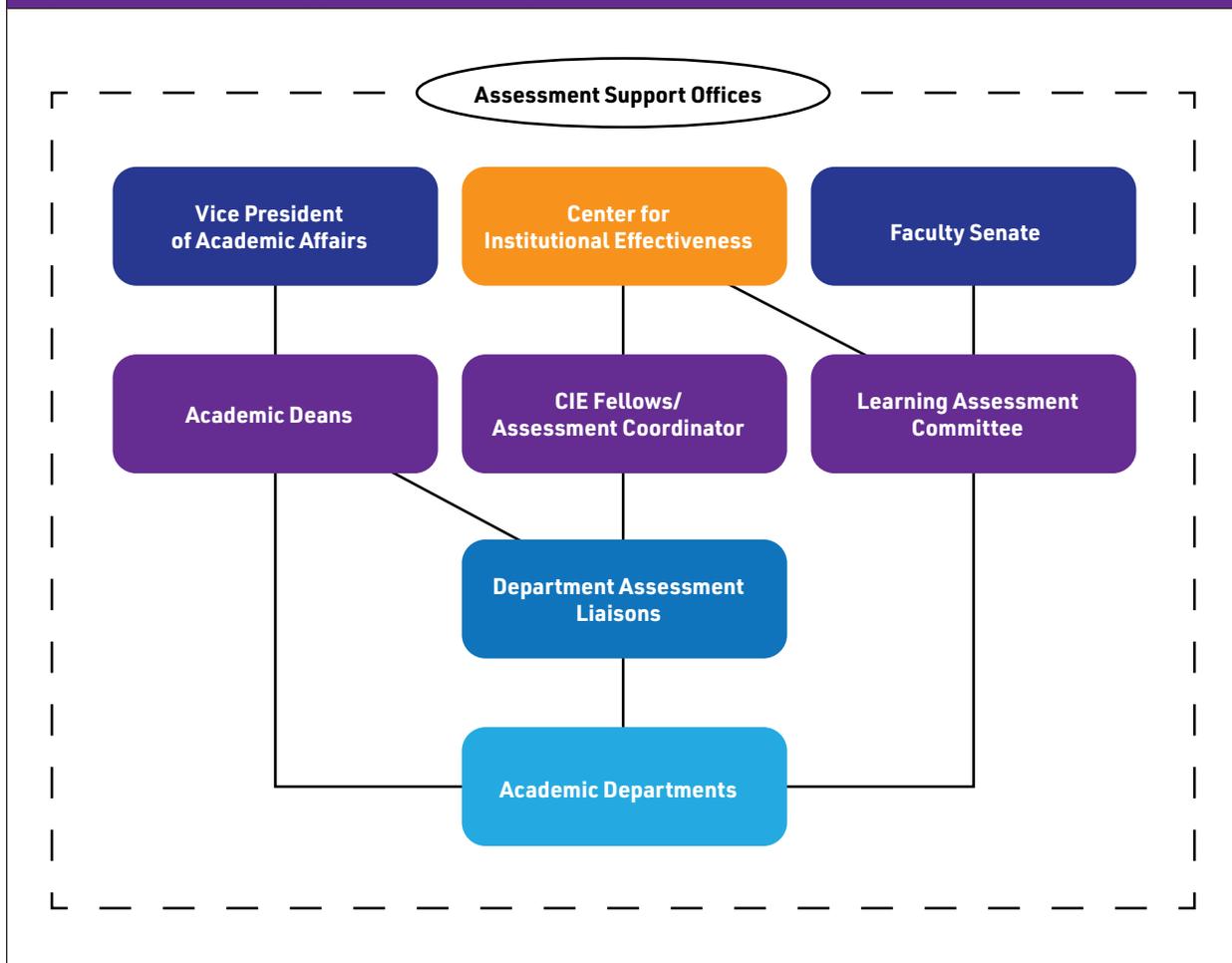
Criterion V-2(c): Supporting and Communicating Student Assessment Results

Bergen’s support network for assessment has significantly evolved over the years with a focus on strengthening and sustaining assessment practices. Figure 9 presents the structure of this network, which is designed to support the academic departments where the programs, options, and courses are housed and where assessment and program review occur. Within these departments, assessment liaisons, 35 in total, facilitate and collaborate with the department’s faculty to ensure a program learning outcomes assessment plan is developed and completed according to the assessment schedule.

CIE has administrative oversight of the assessment of student learning and plays a central role in this network. CIE is led by the Dean of RIE who reports to the President. Three faculty members are assigned to CIE in the role of Assessment Fellows. These Fellows are also instrumental in coordinating and maintaining the assessment and program review processes. They function as consultants to assessment liaisons in developing assessment projects and understanding assessment-related procedures. They also assist departments that are conducting program reviews and develop and facilitate assessment workshops for faculty. Fellows and liaisons receive compensation according to negotiated contractual terms. The President is committed to funding these positions. More information about these roles can be found in the Assessment Handbook. [375]

As noted previously, the LAC is a standing committee of the Faculty Senate and chaired by the Dean of RIE. With representatives from academic departments across the College, this body plays a vital role in developing, maintaining, and refining the framework guiding the assessment of student learning at the College. The LAC provides a conduit through which departments and CIE communicate, review, and discuss college-wide policy and best practices in learning assessment. Faculty representing academic departments are given the opportunity to collaborate on assessment and review topics, then bring back the information discussed to their respective academic departments (LACA) [388] During the LAC’s monthly meetings, committee members learn about what is taking place in assessment across the College (LACM) [389]. In addition, the Dean of RIE routinely makes informative presentations to the Faculty Senate and, if needed, to all faculty during college-wide convenings like faculty conferences/days of development [379].

Figure 9. The Assessment Support Structure at Bergen



Other key stakeholders in the support network include the VPAA, the academic deans, and members of the College community whose offices have been designated Assessment Support Offices.

Providing professional development opportunities is another way the College has supported the assessment of student learning and has communicated about it. This support is evident in the range of professional development activities offered to the faculty by CIE in collaboration with FD and the CITL (AssessInst) [467]; (FD22) [52]. Each year, CIE hosts a kick-off meeting to launch the new cycle of assessment and program review. Invitees include the VPAA, academic deans, department chairs (for program review), and assessment liaisons. This meeting is an opportunity for attendees to get an overview of assessment and program review processes, including the cycles, forms, and support structures - topics covered in the Assessment Handbook. This is the time when changes are presented [379].

Improving communication across the network remains a priority. In fall 2023, the CIE/ITS partnership pivoted to configuring a CIE portal page to make more CIE documents and reports available to internal stakeholders. The first phase of this project focused on making assessment and program review reports more accessible. This improvement initiative combines the features of the College's new portal and Laserfiche to archive and protect these critical institutional assets while making them accessible to appropriate audiences. The CIE portal has also launched (CIEPort) [390]. External stakeholders in the community and partnering colleges learn about Bergen's assessment of student learning via the CIE website.



Criterion V-3: Use of Assessment Results for Improving Educational Effectiveness

The assessment processes at the College are designed with continuous improvement and student success as the central goals. These processes culminate with action plans that are intended to provide a closing-the-loop mechanism for improvements to pedagogy, curriculum, and student learning. Action plans, including those with budgetary implications, are submitted to the dean and the VPAA to ensure that assessment findings and actions can be incorporated into higher level planning and budgeting. This connection ensures that identified improvements in pedagogy, curriculum, and student learning can be appropriately planned and financially supported.

Pre-pandemic, closing the loop on assessment had gaps. Linkages between assessment activities and the resourcing of improvements were not always clear. Since 2022, however, the College has made great strides in linking department, program, and institutional assessment, and connecting results to future planning and student success efforts. Examples of assessment results that have been used for the improvement of pedagogy, curriculum, and student learning include:

General Education Assessment

As discussed in Criterion 1 and 2, the prior model of GE Assessment employed samples of student work that might come from any course and any assignment that might be relevant to the assessed goal. The assessment of this process revealed a number of issues with this model. Realizing the flaws in this model, the head of the GE Committee revamped the process beginning in 2022 using the College’s ELOs as the basis for assessing student work in GE courses. Each year, the GE Committee will focus on 3 to 4 ELOs. The Committee will receive and review reports on aggregated scoring of student work by faculty, as reported in assessment plans and/or through Canvas. It will also convene several “Communities of Practice” from related disciplines to independently score a sample of these artifacts from students with 45 or more credits.

The new process now requires “Signature Assignments” to be developed by departments and used in all assessments of PLOs, and in all GE courses. These signature assignments will also be used to assess the ELO(s) that align with the PLO. Within the Canvas Platform, “Outcomes” will be created and embedded in Canvas rubrics. The corresponding results can be reported either by faculty (to their Assessment Liaison, for aggregation) or by those with Admin status in Canvas. Canvas can report these scores aggregated with the scores from other departments assessing the same ELO in that timeframe. The latter will be especially useful for ILO assessment.

Program Learning Outcomes Assessment

Table 11 shows examples of ways assessment results are used to inform improvements.

Program Review

Academic program review is described in detail in Criterion V-2. However, Table 12 shows examples of programmatic improvements.

Student Support Services Assessment

Table 13 shows how some of our assessment results are used to improve student support services.

Assessment in Planning and Budgeting: Beginning in 2024, instructions regarding budget requests now include supporting outcomes assessment recommendations. Academic deans making these requests now meet with the CFO and VPAA on a quarterly basis in formal “linkage meetings” to review budget requests originating from program review recommendations. See Standard VI for a more detailed discussion of these meetings and the alignment between assessment and budgeting. These connections ensure that identified improvements in pedagogy, curriculum, and student learning can be appropriately planned and financially supported.

Table 11. Examples of Using Assessment Results to Inform Improvements

Department	Assessment Findings	Closing the Loop
Theatre Arts (CIEYR23) [210]	Faculty assessed graduating students' preparation and planning for their career paths, focusing on their portfolios, resumes, and reels. As a result of this assessment, faculty recognized gaps in the student learning experience.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developed a "portfolio culture" within the program with a strong network of experienced students to help the less experienced students. 2. Created monthly "Theatre Arts Forums," which are required for theater majors but open to anyone who is interested in theater. 3. Required students in the Basic Acting course to develop a theatrical resume
History (PRHis) [473]	For the Gateways assessment, initial DWF1 rates for three introductory "gateway" courses, as well as all supporting demographic data, were gathered and analyzed for five years going back to 2014. Students in all History courses were then given surveys to gauge their engagement, learning, and response to teaching strategies.	The redesign efforts included the introduction of active learning strategies, the development of new curricula and teaching resources, the introduction of high-impact practices such as oral history interviews, and the evolution of assessment and assignment strategies.
ESL/ALP (ALPAn24) [474]	For the current assessment cycle, the study was conducted in four sections of Reading classes in Levels 2 and 3 using departmental final exams. The study addressed the following four reading skills and strategies at each level: identifying main ideas, identifying supporting details, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary in context.	It was recommended that faculty use the checklist in addition to the rubric during their norming sessions. The department faculty created a checklist for Grammar and Sentence structure, which is used in addition to the writing scoring rubric that we have been using in Level 3. Also, the department now offers a workshop on Grammar in Writing in the ELRC (Tutoring Center).

Table 12. Program Review - Examples of Programmatic Improvements

Department	Program Review Findings	Closing the Loop
English (WRTRat) [219])	Saw the need to address the stigma of a separate category for Developmental English.	In late 2022, the English department embarked on a process of changing Developmental and College-level English course prefixes from EBS and WRT, respectively, to ENG. In the fall of 2024, the changes are fully in place. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the English department also has modified the syllabi of WRT-101 and WRT-201 to include references to multi-modal assignments, such as slide presentations and group presentations.
Developmental Math (MATseq) [457]	Evaluation of how MAT-048 (Algebra for STEM) prepares students for MAT-160 (Intermediate Algebra) developmental courses and course sequence for STEM majors.	The department divided MAT-048 into a two-semester course (one 4 credit and one 3 credit course) that could replace MAT-048 and still fulfill the MAT-160 requirements.
ESL (ESLRed) [458]	Reducing the number of Grammar credits from 6 to 3 in each of the four levels of ALP.	Supported by a recommendation of an external program review evaluator, the faculty reduced the total number of credits in the ESL/ALP Program from 60 to 48 credits

Professional Development Assessment: Table 14 conveys some ways the College uses assessment results to address professional development.

Table 13. Student Support Services Assessment - Examples of Results

Student Support Service	Results	Use of Results
Cerullo Learning Assistance Center (CLACRep) [461]	Results of the Spring 2022 Student Satisfaction Survey indicated that primary student concerns with online tutoring are: the efficacy and issues with technology.	As a result, the CLAC implemented updated online tutoring policies and provided training opportunities to improve outcomes and student experiences
Sidney Silverman Library (SSL24) [464]	The library examined remote usage during and after the pandemic with a focus on online chats and appointments. The significant increases in usage have led to multiple improvements.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All librarians are reminded to maintain availability for LibCal appointments at the beginning of each month. This ensures students have as many available dates and times as possible when booking appointments. 2. When a librarian is scheduled at the reference desk and needs to help a patron face-to-face, they ask another librarian to log onto chat to maintain coverage. There is an increased understanding of the importance of covering this service. 3. Previously, one librarian was responsible for online synchronous library instruction, but now all librarians participate in this service. Instructional videos are now recorded as needed.

Table 14. Professional Development - Examples of Assessment Results

Professional Development Assessment	Data Assessed	Use of Results
ACUE Pedagogy (ACUEPed) [460]	In 2019, following an examination of the College's CCSSE benchmark results, Bergen partnered with the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) to offer training in evidence-based, effective teaching practices.	Between 2019 and 2023, a significant number, 109 full-time and adjunct faculty members, took the graduate-level ACUE course in Effective Teaching Practices. This course included topics like establishing a productive learning environment, using active learning techniques, promoting higher order thinking, and assessing to inform instruction and promote learning
Faculty Development [52]; (FD23) [53]	The Faculty Development Committee conducted a survey of the faculty in spring 2021. Areas of interest shown in the survey included designing assignments, activities, and assessments and diversity, equity, and inclusion issues.	Based on these results, Faculty Development partnered with CIE, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL), and Equity Council to present faculty workshops to provide opportunities for professional growth and enrichment.
Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL)	<p>CITL and partners engage in ongoing assessment of workshop data. A survey is administered to evaluate workshop offerings and the data collected is used to track the number of participants, rework the existing workshops, and offer additional professional development opportunities.</p> <p>TOPP (The Online Professor Program) is a faculty-driven development program that supports instructors who teach online.</p>	<p>The survey results are shared with the presenters as feedback on which aspects of the workshop worked well and areas for improvement.</p> <p>The feedback from participants is used to inform improvements to the program, including both topics on online pedagogy and the use of technology to prepare an online/hybrid course.</p>

Informing Appropriate Constituents: PR regularly analyzes campaign data such as engagement rates, conversion rates, and ROI across various marketing channels to uncover meaningful insights, patterns, and trends. This data allows the institution to make informed decisions on campaign performance and future strategy development (PRMet) [459]. Additional information on academic and programmatic marketing is in Standard IV.

Improving Key Indicators of Student Success: The Fact Book records enrollment trends (FB23) [43]. As was the case with most institutions, Bergen saw a decrease in enrollment from fall 2020 to fall 2021 due to the pandemic. Enrollment rebounded in 2022 and 2023. The College has sustained several initiatives to improve key performance indicators such as enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

Advising Redesign: After assessing the effectiveness of Bergen's advising model, the Student Affairs leadership team initiated an advising redesign (AdvReD) [223] in January 2023 and implemented it in July 2023. This redesign includes a review of the advising model, technology, and staff structure. The results led to improvements that included a shift from triage-type structure to a proactive teaching model, which has been proven to serve students better and increase retention. Investments in personnel and new technologies were made, including moving eight staff off grant funds and hiring them as full-time advisors, promoting a senior director, implementing Advise, a CRM tool that supports proactive advising and early warning, as well as centralizing the location of all advisors and counselors within the One Stop Center.

Academic Scheduling Changes with Ad Astra: Ongoing review of enrollment data shows the average number of student credit hours was lagging and that a number of course sections conflicted with other courses and overlapped by four to five minutes. This initiated a more comprehensive review of course scheduling to ensure classes are offered in the appropriate sequence to support student persistence and completion. To maximize the number of course hours taken, and to build scheduling efficiencies that provide real-time information on course schedule and demands (AstraSch) [462], Bergen invested in Ad Astra to leverage its tools and services to address these needs and to review key performance indicators in how classes are scheduled and benchmark them against like institutions (HESI). In addition, the College engaged in a review of its scheduling building process (CSIE) (Astra) [224].

SEM Plan: Student Affairs collected and synthesized institutional and environmental data and developed a SEM plan. Many of the initiatives, data, and KPIs in the plan display commitment to assess and continuously improve in a collaborative, institution-wide manner (SEMPlan) [177].

Implementing other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services: Please review Standard IV for a comprehensive discussion on items such as the Bergen app and other initiatives launched by Student Affairs in this area.

Criterion V-4: Not Applicable

Criterion V-5: Meta-Assessment

Bergen's college-wide learning assessment processes have been regularly assessed during the last ten years, and significant improvements have resulted. The holistic examination of the assessment procedures, documents, templates, and schedules that occurred since the pandemic led to notable changes and the implementation of the current integrated assessment model. The updates included adding a question at the start of the assessment report about the use of assessment results from the previous cycle. In 2022, based on broad thinking about the relationship between student learning assessment and program review, the assessment cycle was changed from a two-year/four semester cycle to a one-year/two-semester cycle. Another notable improvement was moving the assessment process and workflow into Laserfiche to facilitate administrative review of the assessment activity and subsequent feedback. See Criterion V-2 for more on the changes made. The current program review and assessment schedule will expire at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year. The next comprehensive assessment of the assessment framework is planned for spring 2026.

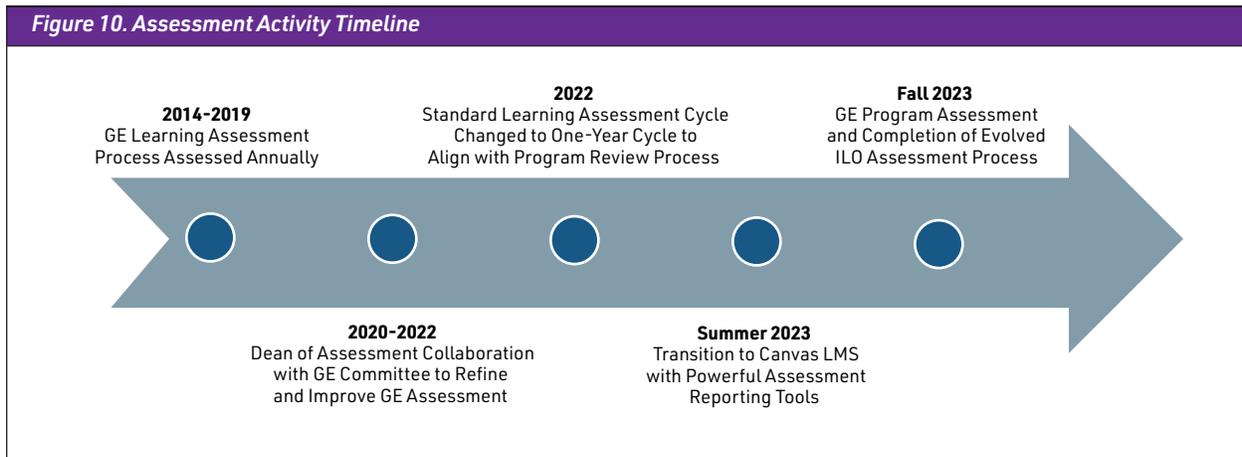
It will gauge stakeholders' perceptions of the model's effectiveness and its processes and solicit input on ways to improve the next five-year cycle. In the meantime, since its implementation in 2022, assessment leaders and CIE Fellows have reviewed the assessment model at the end of each annual assessment and program review cycle. This review considers the reports submitted, participant feedback, CIE inquiries, and participation levels [386].

In 2023-2024, following the prior year's cycle, the LAC discussions about the roles and responsibilities of assessment liaisons led to a formal survey of current and former assessment liaisons in spring 2024. This survey was developed to better understand the liaisons' understanding and views of their work in assessment. A follow-up focus group in fall 2024 added context to these findings, as participants shared their experiences and suggested improvements. The results of this assessment will help inform improvements to the liaison role and the assessment framework (AssessL) [471].

Regarding the assessment of Program Review, the templates include an assessment of the program review process, with the question, "Comment on the Program Review process. What worked well? What could have been done to improve the process?" The answers to this question are reviewed and considered for future cycles. Furthermore, feedback from the academic deans has also resulted in changes in program review templates and the processing of the program review and program option reports. Following the launch of the new templates in 2022, the deans expressed concern that course enrollments, primarily for GE courses, were missing from the review process. They argued that the impact of these courses needed to be documented within the context of the effectiveness of the program/options. The concern was brought to the LAC [389] for input, and after consultation with the VPAA and the deans, the templates and supporting data packets were revised. Similarly, the Dean of RIE addressed a dean's feedback about the submission process for program review reports by creating a Laserfiche form and workflow. This new process was designed to ensure the review and approval of the deans and the VPAA (ProRevHan) [156].

With respect to the GE assessment, the reporting process done annually from 2014 to 2018 included not just reporting student learning outcomes data but also reflecting on the quality of the assessment process and possible improvements. A meta-analysis of these annual reports revealed that although there was much initial optimism about the sustainability and usefulness of the process, there were also general problems across cycles, including an insufficient quantity and distribution of assignments and a noted unevenness of assignment requirements, rigor, and expectations. These observations weighed heavily in the later decisions to have GE/ELO assessment piggyback on annual departmental program assessments, with artifacts assessed at multiple levels, and to have assignments used during assessments both standardized across sections to a critical degree ("signature assignments"), confirmed for their quality and rigor, and assessed with standardized rubrics with the same qualities. The initial decision to redesign GE assessment, made during 2020-2021, commenced with an initial reformulation and reorganization of the GE goals, which was completed and approved in 2022. The redesign itself was completed during a 2023 program review led by the new chair of the GE Committee and the transition that same year to the Canvas, which played a central and necessary role in the evolved and more data-focused GE/ELO assessment process [382].

The timeline shown in Figure 10 captures the highlights of this assessment activity:



Standard V Conclusion

Bergen meets the requirements of Standard V and Requirements of Affiliation 8 and 10. The College has provided evidence that it has established timelines and defined responsibilities for systematic assessment and program reviews. The reviews are conducted with a central emphasis on improving the educational experience of students. The academic enterprise has a robust plan to ensure that programs and options are aligned with institutional planning, resource allocation, outcomes assessment, and subsequent curricular adjustments to improve student learning.

Institutional Strengths

1. The College has strengthened its use of assessment and program review to improve student outcomes and supplement planning and resource allocation efforts.
2. Faculty are engaged in the process and planning of curricular assessment to improve educational effectiveness at the College.

Institutional Opportunities

1. The College should continue to assess and refine the program review process.
2. The College should continue using platforms such as the ACF (see Standard VII) to expand communication and discussion of assessment results to stakeholders.



Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

Bergen takes pride in stewarding its financial and other resources to maximize operational efficiency. Resource planning and allocation are guided by a set of core values and objectives that are reflected in our mission, vision, strategic plan, and our annual Presidential Goals (PresGHist) [229]. As discussed in Standard I, Bergen transitioned to a new strategic plan, *Focusing on the Future 2024-2029 Strategic Plan* (Strategic24) [2], which supersedes the previous *Reimagine Bergen: 2018-2023* (Strategic18) [5] plan that expired at the end of fiscal year 2023. This Standard VI discussion primarily reflects assessment based on the *Reimagine Bergen: 2018-2023* strategic plan, which spans nine years of the ten-year period covered by this self-study report.

Criterion VI-I: Institutional Objectives, Planning, and Resource Allocation

Major Factors that Impact Resource Planning:

The College continuously monitors critical factors that may impact financial planning and resource allocation. Three persistent stress factors that strongly influence financial planning and resource allocation include the College's high reliance on tuition and fees as a major source of revenue (Figure 11, Figure 12), downward trends in student credit enrollment (Figure 13), and non-discretionary labor costs that represents approximately two-thirds of the annual budget (Figure 14).

Makeup of Operating Revenue Sources: The relative proportion of each revenue category reflects the degree to which the College's annual budget depends on each revenue source. Within the Other Sources revenue category, most of these proceeds are derived from return on investment of cash reserves (BOSE25) [392].

Figure 11. Sources of Operating Revenues

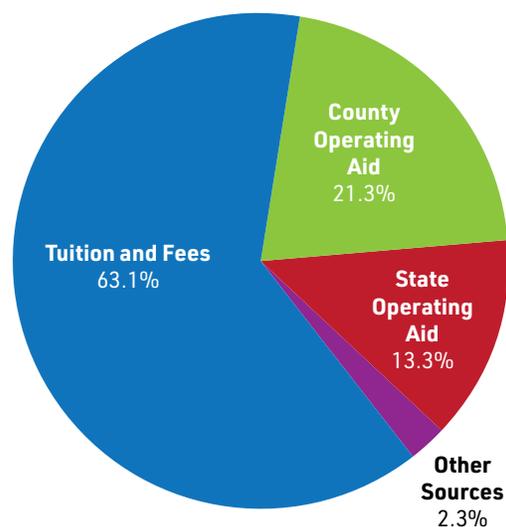
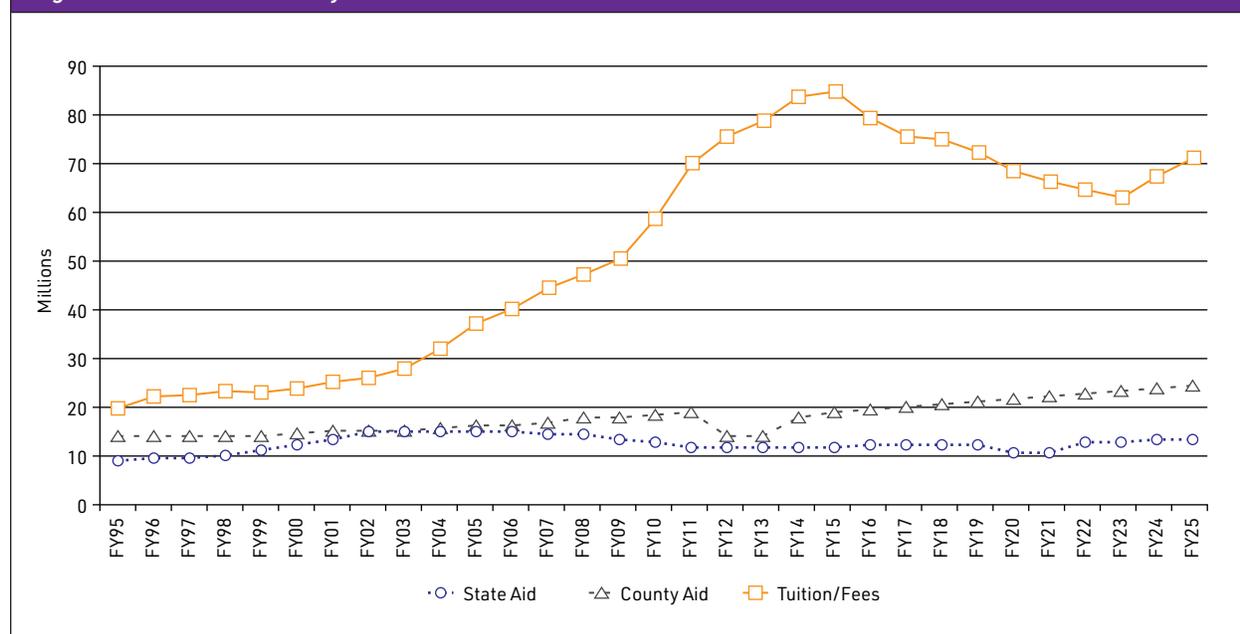


Figure 12. Trends in Revenue by Source FY95 – FY25



Major Factor 1: Growing Dependence on Tuition and Fee Revenues: Figure 14 highlights the widening gap between revenues sourced from tuition and fees versus the amounts sourced from state and county operating aid over the past three decades. Consistent with this historical trend, budgeted tuition, and fee revenues as of FY25 comprise 63 percent of total revenues compared to 42 percent in FY95. The growing and consistent dependence on tuition and fee revenues as a major revenue source illustrates the added pressures faced by Bergen to increase student enrollment and retention, reduce costs, and increase tuition and fee rates to effectively manage finances and optimize resource allocation.

Major Factor 2: Declining Trend in Enrollment and the Impact on Revenues: Over the past 10 fiscal years from FY16 through FY25, the College has experienced a general decline in total credit enrollment (see Figure 13). This downward enrollment trend places additional pressures on revenue generation, leading to increased complexity in balancing the annual operating budget. The College maintains visibility and accountability for monitoring actual enrollment versus forecasted plans by making enrollment reporting, analysis, and discussion a standing agenda item at weekly Cabinet meetings. Furthermore, copies of enrollment reports are generated weekly and shared with members of the Cabinet for their review (Enroll22) [393]. This frequent measurement and reporting of enrollment performance versus plan allows close monitoring of the College's largest revenue generator, and it fosters proactive evaluation of changing dynamics around budget and planning adjustments. As a result, our efforts have started to reverse the enrollment decline beginning in FY23 (Figure 13). Assessment and actions from this enrollment dynamic is discussed further in Standard IV and the sustainability section of this standard.

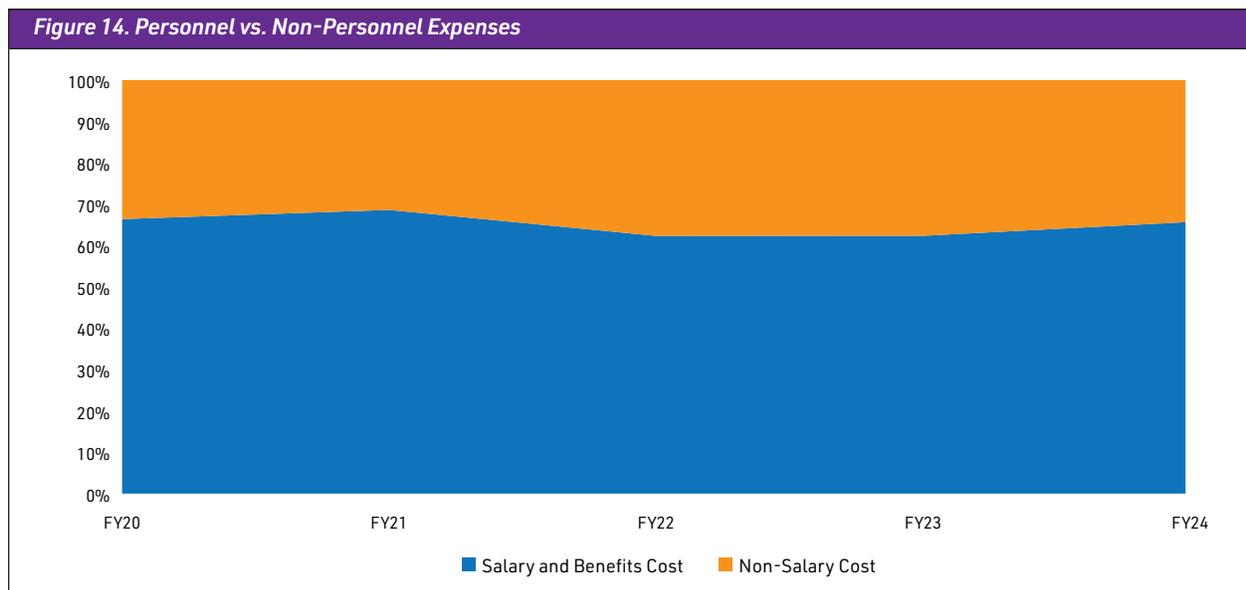
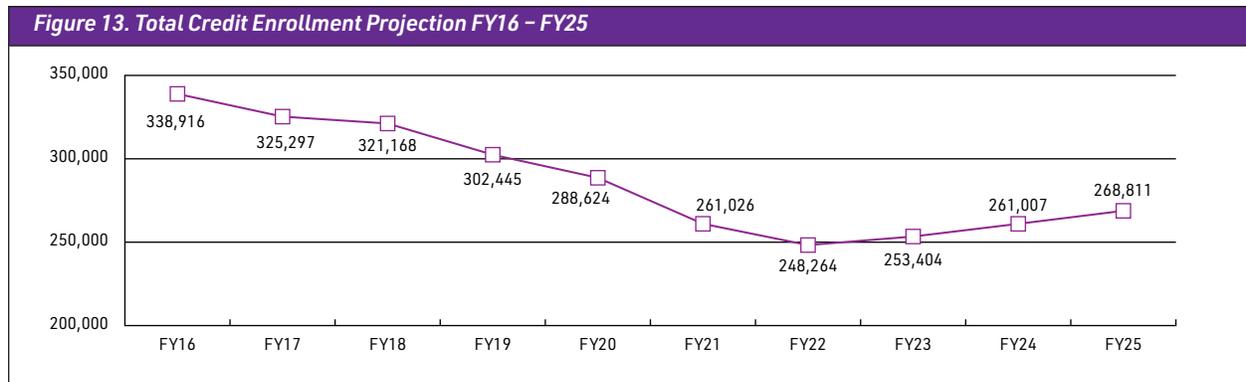


Table 15. Function-Specific plans used in resource allocation planning

Plan	Description
Academic Master Plan (AMP) (AcMasterP) [233]	Contains goals and priorities for delivering academic services to our students. See Standard V for a more detailed discussion of the Academic Master Plan.
Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) [395]	Contains an assessment of all current physical plans and facilities and outlines a plan and timeline for maintenance and capital renewal projects.
Strategic Enrollment Management Plan (SEMPan) [177]	Provides an enrollment management plan outlining goal-oriented, actionable, and measurable strategies.
President’s Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan (PACDEI) [234]	Centers on Bergen’s DEI objectives.
Facilities Master Plan (FacIMP) [235]	Guide for Bergen’s Facilities planning and resource allocation.
Technology Master Plan (TechnMP) [236]	Guide for Bergen’s planning for technology development and deployment.
Energy Audit Report (FacEngA) [285]	Contains a list of measures to improve energy consumption and related cost savings.

Major Factor 3: Personnel and Non-Personnel Costs:

Personnel costs comprise the largest category of expenditure each fiscal year. As shown in Figure 14, personnel costs comprise approximately two-thirds of the total annual expense budget. Considering persistent demand for higher wages and inflationary non-personnel costs, the College takes great care in proactively managing this category of expenses including vacant personnel lines to ensure that available funding goes to the highest priority positions. Additionally, Bergen assesses and prioritizes each new hire to maximize the use of limited personnel lines and fulfill emerging labor needs. Position control is central and strategic. The College actively monitors and discusses vacant personnel lines on an ongoing basis and all new hires are reviewed at the Cabinet level (see sample vacancy list from Cabinet discussion (Vacancy) [394]).

Presidential Goals and Link to Planning and Assessment: Annually the President, with BOT approval, establishes core Presidential Goals (Presidential24) [3] that are aligned with the College’s strategic plan. The Presidential Goal Progress Reports, (PresG21) [230] and (PresG23) [231], serve as the basis for the President’s annual progress report to the BOT. The scope and progression of the President’s goals across fiscal years 2023 and 2024 are reflected in the following table (PresGPros) [232], which provides examples of the goals and their linkages to strategic priorities in the Reimagine Bergen: 2018-2023 Strategic Plan.

Function-Specific Master Plans and Assessment: In addition to the strategic plan and presidential goals, Bergen also employs multi-year, function-specific master plans in critical areas such as academics; enrollment management; diversity, equity and inclusion; facilities; and technology. These function-specific plans establish strategic direction and initiatives that align with Bergen’s strategic plan and the President’s goals. The collective group of function-specific plans support Bergen’s academic departments, student services, operations, continuing education and workforce development, and community engagement. Table 15 outlines examples of function-specific plans used by the College.

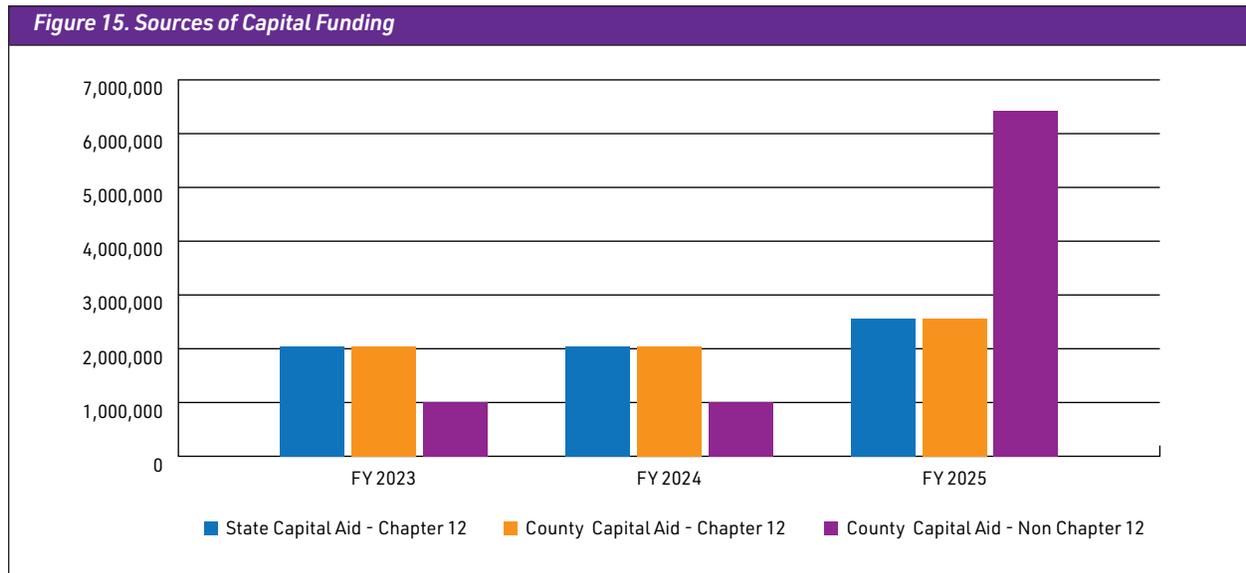
Non-Academic Unit Assessment Plans: In addition to the function-specific plans that supplement planning and assessment, the Cabinet establishes annual strategic goals and initiatives via Non-Academic Unit Assessment Plans that support and align with the President’s goals and Bergen’s strategic plan. Cabinet members work with their respective units to prepare and submit Non-Academic Unit Assessment Plans (NonAAssess) [238] to the President annually. Additionally, Summary Progress Reports to the president (NonAProgress) [239] provide updates on progress toward goals, individual unit plan achievement, and connection to the strategic plan. The strategic priorities of the academic programs focus on student learning and outcomes. These plan assessments are discussed in Standard V. Academic assessment plan results are also reflected in the Office of Academic Affairs assessment plan.

Climate Survey and Other Information Sources: Beyond the individual unit assessments, a climate survey of the Bergen community was conducted in 2022 to obtain feedback on student and employee perceptions, areas of strength and improvement, and progress on key initiatives (see Standard II). One major initiative that emerged from the climate survey was dissatisfaction with the food service provider. As a result, the College conducted an RFP and secured a new food service provider to address student and staff feedback.

Capital Planning: The College creates and submits a six-year capital plan to the County of Bergen each fiscal year (Cap6P) [404]. Plan and outcomes assessment have led to several major investments and allocation of resources for the College’s physical plant, Strategic Plan Goal 1: Reimagine Student Experience – Reimagine Bergen: 2018-2023 [5 p6].

Renovation of 14 Classrooms (Pitkin C-Wing)	Creation and renovation of the One Stop Student Center in the (Pitkin)
Creation of the outdoor classroom space (Quad on the Paramus Campus)	Creation of the Innovation Center (Meadowlands Campus)
Restroom Renovation Projects (All Campuses)	Renovation of the Learning Center (Pitkin)

Capital Funding Sources: Figure 15 shows Bergen’s sources of capital funding for fiscal years 2023 through 2025. Each fiscal year, the State of New Jersey and the County of Bergen provide Chapter 12 funding to support capital building and infrastructure projects. Chapter 12 represents capital appropriation specifically designated for building and infrastructure projects. Examples of these projects include roof repairs, HVAC system upgrade, and building renovations [404]. The State of New Jersey and the County of Bergen equally share 50 percent of the debt service payments for the bonds issued to fund Chapter 12 projects. In fiscal year 2025, the County of Bergen provided supplemental non-Chapter 12 capital funding to facilitate construction of a planned Culinary Arts Building on the Paramus campus. The funding levels for FY 2023 and FY 2024 shown in Figure 15 are most representative of the annual capital funding to the College. The overall trend in annual capital funding serves as evidence of stable capital financial support to execute deferred maintenance and renovation projects for Bergen’s facilities and building infrastructure.



Criterion VI-2: Planning for Constituent Participation and Assessment

Bergen has documented measures to promote its rigorous standards and pursuit of continuous improvement in academic and administrative processes. These measures serve as the backbone of institutional development, providing a roadmap for constituents and expanded stakeholder participation through participatory and shared governance. Using assessment results to drive planning is a vital component of efforts to achieve academic excellence and organizational advancement.

Academic Master Plan: The College crafted a multi-year AMP aimed at achieving Bergen's mission and vision in alignment with the strategic plan. The AMP reflects the voices of students, faculty, deans, and administrative staff, and external constituents. The AMP [233] stems from an inclusive process that engaged more than 200 stakeholders during development. The AMP delineates Bergen's academic program and department objectives for fiscal years 2022-2025 (BOT020122) [396]. The AMP was approved by the BOT at the August 2022 board meeting (BOT 080222) [397]. While formal assessment of the AMP's implementation is pending, there is compelling evidence of its utilization to inform institutional enhancements. For example, under "Strategic Direction #1: Advancing an All-Modalities Teaching and Learning Educational Environment," the College transitioned to a new Learning Management System (Canvas) in Fall 2023 (CanMig) [248].

Annual Budget Process: Bergen's annual budget is developed using the incremental budgeting methodology, which builds on base budgets of the prior fiscal year in addition to inputs solicited from representatives of the academic and non-academic units. The CFO with members of the Cabinet establish baseline budget parameters guided by Bergen's vision and mission. Budget discussions stress alignment of funding with unit goals and outcomes. Bergen shares, presents, and discusses the budget with various internal and external stakeholders, including the Faculty Senate, BOT, the Board of School Estimate (BOTN060122) [249], and other stakeholders.

An example of the College's response to campus feedback is evidenced by the outcomes of a campus survey, where a common theme identified the need for more transparency and involvement of a broader group of stakeholders in the budgeting process. As a result, Bergen established two major improvement initiatives. First, to improve the transparency, development, management, and oversight of the budget process, Bergen launched phase one of a new budget process in FY 2024. This new process employs electronic development and submission of budget requests via the College's ERP system, Colleague, and detailed Operating Budget Instructions (OpBulns) [250]. These instructions assist academic and non-academic units to plan and submit their budget requests for the upcoming planning year. The new process and instructions require justification for funding needs and/or new initiatives and how they align with the strategic plan and the President's goals. Additionally, Bergen launched a new Budget and Finance Committee that falls under the umbrella of the new governance structure (ACFBF) [251]. This committee serves as an advisory body to the President and the Cabinet. The full Finance and Budget Committee will be in place for the 2024-2025 planning cycle.

Academic and Administrative Department Assessment: Bergen's academic and non-academic units conduct regular evaluation and assessments. Academic departments conduct annual assessments of student learning (see Standard V) and perform program reviews every five years. Non-academic units, such as ITS, have annual goals and assess their progress throughout the fiscal year (see Information Technology Unit Assessment Schedule) [238]. The units conduct assessments to evaluate and document progress towards their strategic goals and objectives. In addition, these assessment results are used to identify areas of need and opportunities for future improvement. During the budget process, the Finance Director and CFO meet with the unit leaders to discuss their priorities and goals.

Bergen recognizes the need to continue expanding and enhancing documentation and use of assessment outcomes to guide new action plans, enhance decision-making, and improve resource allocation processes. As a result, core members of the Cabinet, including the VPAA, the CFO, the Dean of RIE, and the academic deans, collaborate to conduct linkage meetings to discuss academic assessment results, evaluate the impact of new initiatives and resource allocation, and any resulting budgetary impact. These meetings connect

assessment results, program reviews, and divisional goals, thereby facilitating informed resource allocation and funding decisions. Linkage meetings are further discussed in criteria 3 of this standard (see example of documented output from linkage meetings (FinLink) [398]).

Constituent Participation Through a Shared Governance Structure: Bergen’s participatory and shared governance structure was enhanced to improve communication related to decision-making, planning, and process improvement. As a result, the ACF was created in 2022 to improve communication transparency and expand the number and breadth of voices that provide input in Bergen’s overall governance structure [240]. Through the ACF, various committees and constituents directly interact with the College’s leadership to share ideas, ask questions, and participate in an advisory capacity in the decision-making process. Further information on the structure, function, and operation of the ACF is presented and discussed in Standard VII.

Criterion VI-3: Financial Planning

Alignment with the College’s Strategic Plan, Vision & Mission: Bergen strives to promote continuous improvement in its budgeting and financial planning processes. In view of the College’s three major factors that impact financial planning, high dependence on tuition and fee revenues, trends in enrollment, and personnel and operating costs (Figure 13, Figure 14, Figure 16), it is increasingly important that the College employs sound fiscal management of limited resources.

Annually, the presidential goals and objectives serve as a guide for the Cabinet’s annual strategic goals and initiatives. The Cabinet’s goals in turn drive goals and objectives for Bergen’s academic and administrative departments. This approach to goal setting has created synergy among departments and has helped to ensure that constituents are focused on a common set of priorities. The AMP [233], for example, outlines Bergen’s overall academic goals that are aligned with the strategic plan. Use of this and other function-specific plans (Criterion 2 of this standard) helps Bergen to prioritize initiatives for funding and implementation. Similarly, allocation of personnel resources is based on linking needs to Bergen’s mission and strategic priorities. Bergen enhanced this allocation process via linkage meetings (Standard V), which use academic and non-academic departmental assessment to guide budget prioritization and discussions (ProRevCh23) [262], (FinLinkCh) [261].

Annual Budget Process and Timeline: Bergen’s annual budget is based on a fiscal year that spans July 1 through June 30 of the following year. The budget process for the following fiscal year usually begins in September/October. The Finance Department initially meets with the Cabinet to discuss and establish budget priorities, the strategic direction of the College, and each department’s budgetary requirements, including new/additional budgetary needs based on input from their respective units. New budgetary funding needs are reviewed and considered later in the budget process when there is a clearer picture of the total financial needs of the institution. The College is committed to producing a balanced budget, which is exemplified by its ability to do so each fiscal year through the last 10 planning cycles. To launch the budget planning cycle, the Finance Department distributes Operating Budget Instructions [250], and budget templates (BudTemp) [252] to academic and administrative departments for use in developing and submitting their budgets.

Continuous Improvement of the Budget Process: The Finance Department has undertaken the first phase of rolling out a web-based budgeting tool to be used for the FY25 budget process (Criterion 2). The academic departments provide their funding requests for non-salary expenditures, lecturers, and adjunct professors. Assessment of requests for full-time faculty positions are done during the linkage meetings (Standard V). Administrative departments also submit their non-salary budgets via the budget module, and all initiatives must align with their unit assessment. In most cases, non-salary budget requests are based on previous spending patterns. The Finance and Human Resources departments maintain a Vacancy Funds Analysis (VacFunAn) [253] that provides details of open/vacant positions, and available budget funding, which is used to aid in such discussions. To facilitate effective allocation/reallocation of limited personnel funds, each vacant position is assessed and discussed at departmental and Cabinet levels to assess personnel needs

prior to hiring. The linkage meetings also facilitate assessment of personnel needs. Where appropriate, funds associated with vacant positions in one area may be reallocated to another, and positions may be de-obligated via BOT action as deemed appropriate (BOTM030724) [254]. Academic and administrative departments also submit capital budget requirements at this point in the budget process. Bergen's representatives subsequently meet with the County of Bergen financial team to preview and discuss preliminary plans for annual operating and capital appropriations.

The revenue portion of the budget is developed by the Finance Department and supported by a detailed Revenue Projections Analysis (RevPrAn) [255]. Revenue sources include student tuition and fees, county/state funding, investment/interest income, rental income from use of College facilities, and other miscellaneous income sources. The Finance Department works with enrollment management to develop enrollment projections to facilitate calculation of tuition revenue. Tuition revenue is based on estimated credit hours and tuition and fees. Enrollment projections are based on enrollment history, trends, state and national enrollment climate, and local projections. Institutional grant expenses are budgeted on a per-grant basis as there are specific requirements from funding agencies. These grants are included in Bergen's operating budget process as a consolidated line item in the summary budget. Since grant expenses are offset by grant revenues/funding received, the Office of Grants Administration and the Controller's Office share responsibility for ensuring that the associated revenue and expense budgets for such grants are accurately recorded and tracked in the financial systems. This is done at the start of each fiscal year for existing grants, and during the fiscal year for newly awarded grants.

Departmental cost reductions, opportunities for enrollment increases, tuition increases, additional county/state support, new program development grants, and other revenue increases are examples of financial planning and initiatives that are prioritized in the development of a balanced budget. Budget surpluses provide an opportunity to fund additional budget requests and strategic priorities, as does additional state and/or county funding provided during the year. The Finance Department has ongoing discussions and provides updates to the Cabinet and the BOT regarding Bergen's financial status. When the budget is final (March – April), the Finance Department presents the completed budget via budget presentations to several stakeholder groups. This includes, for example, presentations of the operating and capital budgets to the Board of School Estimate (BOSE061223) [256], the Faculty Senate (FS092722) [257], and the Management Team. Presentations are also focused on specific budget-related topics, which include for example Capital Planning Requirements (CFO102121) [258], and Post-Covid Budgetary Reality (Fin040522) [259]. The budget is approved by the Board of School Estimate and the BOT in May/June, which includes the approval of any recommended changes in student tuition and/or fees, as reflected in the budget.

Financial Planning and Analysis, and Budget Adjustments: Throughout the fiscal year, academic and administrative department heads are responsible for monitoring their financial results, which they do via Bergen's Colleague financial system. This approach encourages monitoring of actual spend against budget. The Finance Department also provides each department with a monthly Budget Overview Report (FinOvR) [260], which provides summary budget versus actual results. During the year, academic departments conduct program assessments that assist in the evaluation of financial and other needs. Linkage meetings are conducted by the CFO with the VPAA, academic deans and the Dean of RIE to discuss assessment results and address if any financial budgetary adjustments are needed to meet needs identified from the assessment results [261], [262]. The Finance Department is responsible for monitoring the financial results on a college-wide basis, which includes tracking and addressing significant favorable and unfavorable variances to budget, spending patterns, or potential budgetary surpluses or shortfalls. The Finance Department prepares a monthly Revenue-Expense Analysis Report (FinRevExp) [263], and other financial information which is provided to the CFO. The CFO provides periodic financial updates to the President and Cabinet. After the final budget is approved, Bergen allows for the reallocation of the budget based on emerging or changing needs and priorities. Departments can therefore submit budget transfer/adjustment requests to the Finance department for consideration and approval. The approval process includes the discussion and review of such requests with the Cabinet to ensure that consensus agreement is achieved, and



a fact-based decision is reached (FinBugP) [399].

Criterion VI-4: Adequate Fiscal and Human Resources, Physical and Technical Infrastructure

Human Resources: The Vice President of HR collaborates with the President, other members of the Cabinet, and the extended College community to oversee personnel position management with an ethic of care. Cabinet members, with input from their respective department leaders, discuss position replacements, new hires, and/or promotions before the planned action is sent to the BOT for approval. This approach in managing human capital has enabled the College to be deliberate in its hiring processes, ensuring that the most critical personnel needs are prioritized.

Candidate Recruitment, Selection, and Onboarding: HR has primary responsibility for the College’s commitment to attracting, developing, and retaining highly qualified employees who support Bergen’s vision and mission. Bergen has four bargaining units across faculty and staff (i.e., adjunct faculty, faculty, professional staff, and support staff). The bargaining unit contracts, and Bergen’s policies and procedures govern how personnel matters are administered for these four groups. As of fall 2024, Bergen is conducting new contract negotiations with each of the representative unions. Confidential positions, which are composed of non-union, at-will employees, are not supported by a unit contract. Hires for all full-time positions are approved by the BOT. Reappointments for unionized professional and support employees, and non-union confidential employees are approved by the BOT at the end of each fiscal year for the following year (BOTM061323) [264].

Bergen prioritizes hiring highly qualified and diverse faculty and non-instructional staff. As of FY 2024, there were 210 full-time instructional faculty, 30 full-time non-instructional faculty, 638 adjunct faculty and 356 non-instructional staff. Bergen is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) with 41.5 percent of the student body identifying as Hispanic. Currently, only 5.8 percent of the full-time faculty and 12.4 percent of adjunct faculty identify as Hispanic/Latino. Through PACDEI, Bergen is developing plans to recruit and engage more academic professionals who represent the cultural and ethnic diversity of the college’s student base. See Standard II, Criterion 4 for a detailed discussion on fair and impartial hiring practices.

Bergen uses Ellucian Colleague/Automatic Data Processing for personnel management to store historical employment records. Bergen’s annual Fact Book provides human resources data pertaining to Bergen personnel and data relating to enrollment, graduates, College finances and demographics (FB23) [43].

Salary and Benefits: HR manages Bergen’s compensation structure and rates, and the benefit plan offerings available to personnel, including healthcare/wellness, paid time off, and retirement benefits (HRHBen) [269]. Bergen offers a competitive benefits package to full-time personnel which includes medical, dental, and vision coverage, as well as a flexible spending account option, and mandatory enrollment in the New Jersey state pension program. Bergen also offers tuition reimbursement and tuition waiver opportunities for full-time personnel, except for grant funded employees. Aside from enrolling in a pension, the other benefits are not available to part-time personnel.

Adequacy of Facilities: Bergen has over one million square feet of building space across its three locations. The main Paramus campus houses the core College academic programs and curriculum and the major administrative groups. The Pitkin Education Center is the largest building on the Paramus campus, housing many of Bergen’s academic programs and services.

The Philip Ciarco Jr. Learning Center located in Hackensack, provides targeted continuing education classes, ESL classes, and preparation to take the High School Equivalency test. Bergen at the Meadowlands, located in Lyndhurst, serves the southern tier of Bergen County residents with core programs, as well as more recent offerings as part of the College’s Innovation Center including cybersecurity, gaming, and new four-year programs with Ramapo College of New Jersey. The Innovation Center is an example of continuous improvement to meet the unique needs of Bergen County and the region (InnoMead) [270].

The Facilities Department supports Bergen's mission and vision by maintaining and redeveloping the facilities of all three campuses. Focus is placed on continuous improvement around the aesthetics and utility of buildings, providing clean, sustainable, and safe facilities to the College community. Facilities works closely with the Office of Public Safety to ensure the safety and security of all three campuses. The Vice President of Facilities is a member of the Cabinet and functions as an integral participant in developing the strategic priorities of the College.

Bergen has made several impactful capital investments over the last several years to enhance its learning experience and offerings. These investments include construction of the Health Professions Integrated Teaching Center (2018), the STEM Student Research Center (2019), and the development and redesign of Bergen's One-Stop Center (2021). The One Stop Center greatly benefits students, allowing access to critical services in one location rather than visiting separate offices (OneStop) [271] and (OneSP072023) [272]. Bergen is currently in the process of adding a LEED-certified culinary arts building on the Paramus campus to further improve the facilities for the culinary arts program students and to drive program sustainability.

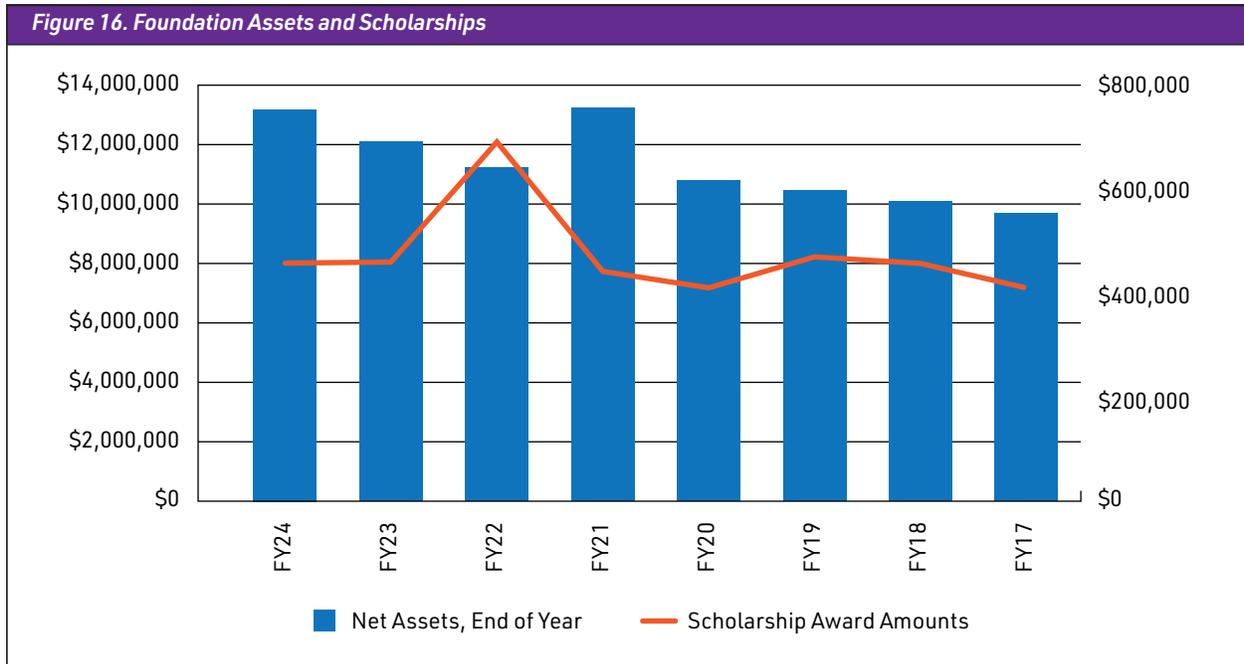
The Facilities Department has a 10-year Facilities Master Plan that supplements the strategic plan [235]. A corresponding map of facilities is available online and on-campus Campus Map (Map) [273].

Adequacy of Technology Infrastructure: ITS continuously assesses opportunities for upgrading and enhancing Bergen's technology infrastructure. ITS also provides services such as academic computing, cyber security awareness and protection, document and records management, media technologies, multi-factor authentication, mainframe support, Wi-Fi access, and other services. Academic computing for example includes managing the student computer labs, assisting students with technology needs, and supporting the faculty with innovative instruction technologies. Media technology services include assistance with classroom audio visual equipment, video-conferencing support, video production and production of classroom media, and sound or projection support for special events. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) is a member of the Cabinet which ensures that there is strong alignment between ITS initiatives and the overarching business strategy of the College. The CIO also ensures that technology is leveraged as a strategic enabler across divisions to achieve Bergen's vision, mission, and strategic priorities.

Significant initiatives have been undertaken to improve Bergen's information technology capabilities. Examples of these initiatives include upgrades of our virtual desktop infrastructure, single sign-on for enhanced application security, and the Canvas LMS (ITImp) [274]. The Information Technology plan can be found here: [236].

The 2023 implementation and launch of Canvas represents a significant enhancement to students' learning experience. The decision to deploy this new industry-leading technology enhanced LMS was driven primarily by student demand for a more robust course delivery system and assessments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic (CITLCan) [400]. The pandemic increased the urgency to move forward with improving online course delivery and expanding course options. As a result, the College partnered with Bergen County government to jointly fund the launch of Canvas. The College acknowledges that increasing demand for online options in higher education requires flexible schedules and delivery support for students as they work toward earning degrees. Hybrid learning also offers greater flexibility to students by allowing them to take classes in-person or online. Furthermore, hybrid learning also supplements the delivery mode with course material on an LMS. The implementation of an enhanced LMS directly links to 2021-2022 Presidential Goal #4 [229].

The Role of the Foundation: Founded in 1983, the Foundation raises funds to support student scholarships, strategic program needs, and special projects that supplement public funds. The Foundation is governed by a 32-member Board of Directors that is responsible for setting its strategic direction and philanthropic priorities. Members are responsible for personal philanthropic engagement with the Foundation as well as outreach to potential donors. The Foundation supports a portfolio of student scholarships that are awarded three times per year as well as student emergency funding (used for transportation, books, and food), support for student attendance at conferences and educational trips, study abroad opportunities, special project support, cultural programming, and faculty professional development.

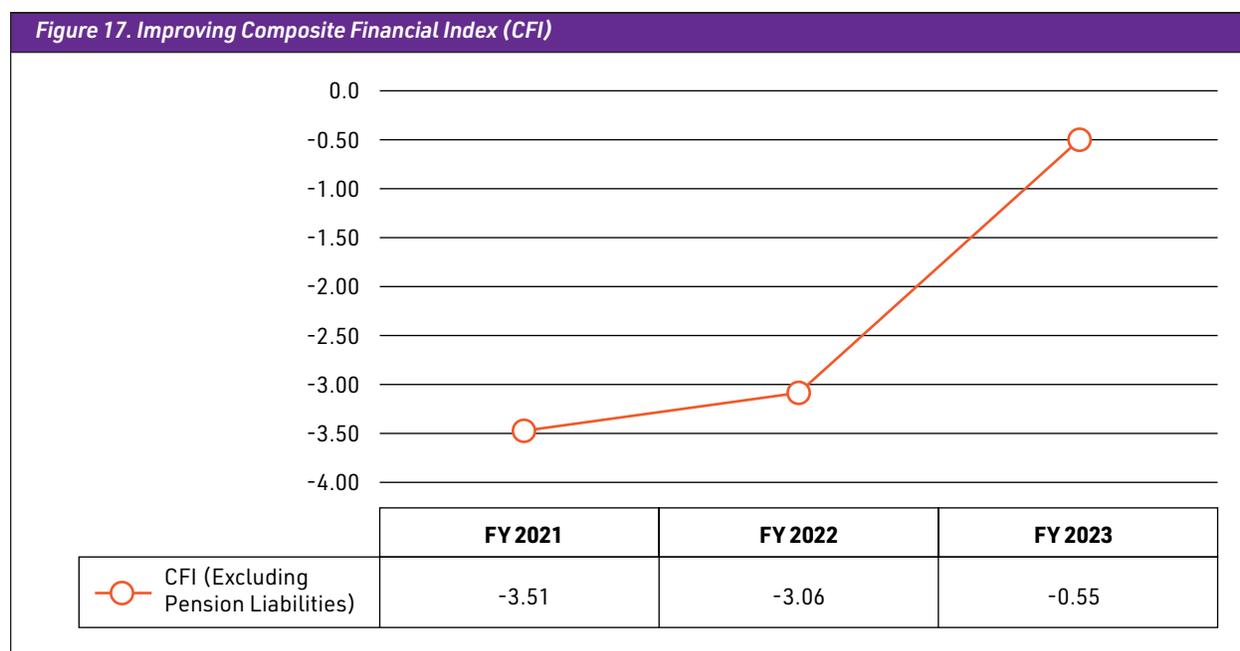


The Foundation’s FY24 estimated net assets totaled \$12,891,115. During fiscal year 2024, the Foundation awarded \$442,067 in scholarship support. Scholarship awards each year are based upon the previous year’s interest and earnings on each endowed fund at a percentage rate set by the Foundation’s Scholarship Committee, while annual scholarship awards are based upon the fund balance and donor intent.

Financial Sustainability: The operational and fiscal sustainability of the College is of critical importance to its longevity and success. This reality is at the center of a routine focus on continuous improvement and sustainability initiatives. Personnel costs comprise the largest component of annual expenses (two-thirds), followed by facilities maintenance. As a result, the College emphasizes the integration of sustainable practices into our planning fiscal management. These initiatives are couched in continuous assessment of our fiscal position through monthly budget versus actuals analysis and meetings of the Board’s Finance Committee to closely monitor financial performance [399]. Fiscal monitoring and sustainability efforts include both revenue generation as well as cost cutting measures. An example of revenue generation is evidenced in the College’s efforts to expand existing academic programs and develop new ones to grow enrollment and related revenues to pre-pandemic levels. An example of cost-containment measures is evidenced by the College’s strong focus on strategic management of personnel expenses through Cabinet-level monitoring and prioritizing of vacant positions. In 2024, the College de-obligated 17 vacant positions that no longer fit our strategic objectives. De-obligation codified that these positions were removed from the organization chart. The total budget amount for these positions exceeded \$1 million [254]. As the College continues to prioritize financial sustainability, other sustainability measures include:

- Develop and promote a collaborative relationship between the College and Bergen County leadership to

- build sustainable, reliable funding into a long-term funding model.
- Incorporate sustainability initiatives into campus planning, including new construction, deferred maintenance and repairs, purchasing, and financial administration.
- Utilize the College’s 10-year Facilities Master Plan and Facilities Condition Assessment (i.e. deferred maintenance plan) to prioritize and fund facilities infrastructure.
- Implement energy efficiency measures to reduce energy consumption and related expenses and redeploy these savings to high-priority initiatives.
- Reduce waste through strategically retiring obsolete programs and by improving policies and procedures to align with new strategic priorities.
- Leveraging the buying power of County of Bergen partners to collaborate and benefit from shared services such as landscaping, transportation, and other services.
- Strategically manage vacant headcount to ensure that allocation of the largest expense (labor) is tied to data analysis and the College’s strategic goals.
- Rehires are discussed at Cabinet and transparently vetted.
- A list of available vacant positions is available for review and vetting during personnel discussions.
- Expansion of the COL.
- Launch of relevant new academic programs.
- Scheduling efficiencies through Ad Astra.
- Expansion of the Center for Innovation at the Lyndhurst site.



Composite Financial Indicator: The CFI methodology is used by the State of New Jersey and the College to gauge its financial health. The CFI score is calculated using five key financial ratios; Primary Reserve Ratio, Net Income Using an Operating Indicator Ratio, Net Income Using Delta in Unrestricted Assets Ratio, Return on Net Assets, and Viability Ratio (CFI22) [401]

Facilities and Infrastructure Sustainability: Bergen’s three locations operate in a locale that has a high cost of maintenance. The College is sensitive to escalating construction and maintenance costs, and consequently, we have employed the function-specific plans (Table 12 of Standard VI: Criterion 1) to bolster sustainability, efficiency efforts, and direct how we prioritize and allocate funding for competing projects.



In addition to the listed assessment and prioritization reports, the Facilities Department also restructured the makeup of its internal staff to reduce reliance on external vendors to conduct routine maintenance. For example, in 2021, the internal trade staff at the College consisted of one electrician. As a result, the College spent significant funds on contracting an external electrical service to supplement our internal resources. Similar circumstances applied to other trades such as plumbing and mechanics. In conjunction with sustainability efforts, the College subsequently hired in-house mechanics, plumbers, and electricians, and deployed them to complete much of the routine maintenance to keep our facilities functioning effectively. This effort alone has saved the College over \$100,000 compared to the original operating budget, and these savings were deployed to further expand services and campus improvements.

The College also took advantage of a no-cost energy audit offered by PSE&G to identify energy efficiency projects such as replacing old equipment while reducing energy consumption. Many of these projects include rebates and other incentives that further reduce the College's facilities costs. The College is currently planning to undertake further large-scale improvements to decrease maintenance and energy costs into the near future.

Across departments, efforts like those described for the Facilities Department are under way to identify and reduce costs such that operations are not negatively impacted. The holistic approach to financial sustainability serves as a positive tool for ensuring that through close monitoring, analysis, and taking proactive steps to manage our resources, the College is positioned to remain fiscally viable in the foreseeable future.

Bergen's fiscal health is a strong driver of the extent to which funding is available for academic programs, physical plant maintenance upkeep, technology resources, personnel, and other programs necessary to effectively administer the College. Despite the challenges associated with enrollment trends and high dependence on tuition and fee revenues, prudent management of fiscal resources continues to improve overall financial position. Evidence of this improvement is demonstrated by the positive trends in CFI (Figure 17: Improving Composite Financial Index (CFI) which consistently improved over the past three fiscal years: FY21, FY22, and FY23 (the financial audit for FY24 is currently in progress). The CFI shown excludes the pension liabilities that are included in the audited report. Note that these liabilities are borne by the State of New Jersey. However, they are included in the College's financial statements due to GASB 75 accounting requirements. Progress in this area is consistent with Goal 4 of the Reimagine Bergen: 2018-2023 [5].

Criterion VI-5: Clear Assignment of Responsibility and Accountability in Decision-Making

The BOT functions as the governing body responsible for institutional oversight of Bergen's reputation, mission, and resources. The BOT delegates responsibility for the day-to-day management and administration of the College to the President. Standard VII provides a full discussion of the role of the BOT and delegation of responsibilities for Bergen's leadership and oversight. The BOT bylaws can be found on the College's website at (BOTBylaws)[74].

The President is responsible for the day-to-day oversight, management, and administration of Bergen. The President provides executive leadership and direction for the planning, execution, and assessment of the College's programs and services. The President proactively sets the strategic direction of his staff and the broader College community through his annual goals. Working closely with his Cabinet, he prioritizes compliance with laws, statutes, regulatory requirements, and College policies. To bolster compliance efforts, the President established the Office of Compliance whose primary focus is on compliance-related matters. The President has demonstrated deep commitment to leading with an ethic of care, by approaching the success of Bergen's diverse student body and staff through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. By forging strong relationships with governmental, educational, corporate, and private sector leaders, he is focused on implementing initiatives and programs that translate into students' upward mobility.

The members of the Cabinet report directly to the President. The Cabinet is composed of a diverse group of leaders, each with responsibility for executing the goals and objectives across the institution

(Leadership) [237]. The Cabinet's responsibilities include strategic decision-making, policy implementation, and overseeing the College's operations. As key advisors to the President, the Cabinet helps shape the direction and vision of Bergen, ensuring its continued growth and success. Their collective expertise and support are instrumental in achieving Bergen's mission and goals, which ultimately benefit students, faculty, staff, and the broader community served by the College.

The Cabinet shares the President's commitment to providing effective governance, fiscal responsibility, technological advancement, academic excellence, and on-going assessment that leads to data-informed decision-making. As stated in Criterion 1 of this standard, the Cabinet establishes annual strategic goals and initiatives that support the President's goals and Bergen's strategic plan. These leadership goals in turn serve as the guiding principles for the academic and administrative departments. The close reporting relationship and alignment with the President creates synergy across departments and ensures that these leaders are focused on a common set of priorities that advance Bergen's vision and mission. The reporting structure for Cabinet members is represented in the College's organizational chart (OrgCh24) [153].

Bergen's Management Team consists of deans, assistant and associate vice presidents, directors, and managers who report to members of the Cabinet. Management Team members provide guidance and direction to their supervisors and staff to complete their job responsibilities. Goals and priorities are strategically linked throughout the College from the President to the different leadership teams and individual staff members. As discussed in Criterion 1 and Criterion 2 of this standard, Bergen has representative bodies and committees that comprise its participatory and shared governance structure, consisting of the SGA, Faculty Senate, and the ACF. The ACF impacts the College in several ways (see Standard VII for a detailed discussion on shared governance). While the committees of the ACF do not have decision-making powers, they serve as advisory bodies to the President and the Cabinet in the decision-making process. This inclusive structure solicits and ensures that a diverse array of perspectives and voices are not only heard but also considered (ACF100322) [277]. It promotes transparency in the decision-making process. When fundamental issues, policies, and initiatives are openly discussed, it fosters trust and accountability within the College community. (ACFAnnEx) [278]. The ACF encourages collaboration and cooperation among various stakeholders. The ACF improves participation in the decision-making process, broadening the platform for collective problem solving.

Criterion VI-6: Comprehensive planning for facilities, infrastructure, and technology

Bergen's infrastructure includes buildings, classrooms, laboratories, offices, information technology equipment, and other technologies that are critical elements of the learning experience and a key focus of Bergen's strategic plan. High-quality infrastructure facilitates enhanced instruction, improves student learning outcomes, and allows employees to perform more efficiently and effectively.

Consistent with the strategic plan, Bergen actively monitors and improves facilities and technology capabilities to ensure a robust learning and teaching environment. These activities are linked to Bergen's financial planning and budgeting process. Each year Bergen develops an annual budget which includes a six-year capital plan based upon the College's Master Plan and existing facilities and technology conditions. See Bergen's most recent Master Plan [235], (FacCPR) [279] capital funding plan for information technology and facilities projects [279], [236], Board of School Estimates presentation [256], and the Facilities Condition Assessment [395].

In 2022, Bergen allocated funding to commission a Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) to identify and prioritize major assets and infrastructure and related timing for maintenance and/or replacement. The FCA serves as the basis for planning facility and technology infrastructure upgrades. Bergen has also performed assessments of HVAC systems (FacHVAC) [280], irrigation systems (FacIrr) [281], classrooms (FacCla) [282], restrooms (FacWC) [283], and parking lots (FacPark) [284] that will be used to plan short and long-term projects which will enhance campus facilities and amenities.



Bergen has partnered with PSE&G to audit the energy efficiency of all facilities and identify energy conservation measures [285]. Bergen will coordinate the energy conservation measures with deferred maintenance needs to identify a plan to improve facilities, decrease carbon footprint, and align financial resources with facility needs.

Bergen has leveraged technology to improve the capabilities and efficiency of the facilities and maintenance staff. Asset management software has been implemented to manage preventative maintenance schedules and expedite repairs, as needed. In the spirit of continuous improvement, all work requests have now been centralized to a facilities request form (FacWO) [286] to better organize and plan facilities work. When a facilities service request is submitted, the Facilities Department and the requestor receive status updates/notifications from the time of origination to completion. The Facilities Department uses the related work orders to prioritize, track, and report on progress. This data allows for continuous assessment and provides historical information that will aid in planning maintenance and facilities projects, and the related financial requirements.

As discussed in Criterion 4 of this standard, ITS manages and maintains the technology infrastructure that is required to support Bergen's operations and programs in a secure and reliable manner. In addition to the on-going technology services it provides, ITS has also undertaken several technological enhancements and implementations, as summarized in Criterion 4, which have significantly improved Bergen's information technology capabilities and infrastructure. Each year ITS submits technology initiatives for consideration as part of the annual financial planning and budgeting process.

Criterion VI-7: Annual Independent Audit and Financial Viability

Bergen conducts three major audits for each fiscal year: financial, single (federal, state, and local grants), and enrollment. Over the past five audit cycles, Bergen has not received a management letter from the audit process. The last 10 years of Bergen's audited financial statements are available on the website (BOTAudR) [287]. Since Bergen is a non-federal entity that expends \$750,000 or more in federal funds, it is subject to single audit requirements, previously known as the OMB Circular A-133 audit. Bergen's audit procedures include the single audit as a component of the overall audit report. On an annual basis, an independent certified public accounting firm (PKF O'Connor Davies, external auditor, or auditor) performs a single audit which includes an examination of Bergen's financial statements, and compliance with federal grant award requirements. The single audit also provides assurance to regulators, Bergen County executives and other community stakeholders that Bergen's financial statements, books, and records are fairly stated, reliable, and compliant with relevant laws, regulations, and accounting standards. Bergen is also required by federal and some state agencies to have an annual audit performed to be considered for institutional grant funding.

Bergen also engages in an annual enrollment audit to satisfy reporting compliance requirements per NJCCC guidelines. The enrollment audit requirements are set forth in the Statement of Auditing and Accounting Standards for County Colleges issued by the NJCCC (EnrAud) [288]. The enrollment data from this audit serves as the primary input into the funding formula that determines Bergen's proportion of total state aid to New Jersey's community colleges' funding formula (FundFor) [289]. The enrollment audit is also used by Bergen to determine the chargeback rates for high school students who attend the College.

The audits are performed in the fall of each fiscal year, with fieldwork conducted on campus and virtually. For FY23 and FY22, the single audit work performed by the external auditors resulted in no material exceptions noted and the issuance of unqualified audit opinions (FinAud22) [290] and (FinAud23) [291]. The audit and the supporting workpapers are stored in an online secure client engagement portal managed by the external auditors (FinExAud) [292].

An annual audit is also performed for the Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that is independent of Bergen. However, the Foundation's audit is included in Bergen's annual audit report. The Foundation audit

is performed by a different external auditor than the auditor used for Bergen's annual single audit. See the Foundation's audited financial statements and accompanying audit reports for FY22 and FY23 (FounFin22) [293] and (FounFin23) [294]. Bergen's external auditor obtains representations and confirmations from the Foundation's external auditors, and relies on their fieldwork, work papers, and opinion of the Foundation's financial statements.

As of FY23 and FY22, the audit work performed by the Foundation's external auditors has resulted in no material exceptions noted. Selected Foundation financial statements are included in Bergen's annual report.

Criterion VI-8: Measuring Utilization of Institutional Resources

Bergen's planning process supports strategic decision-making by providing a comprehensive review of resources and commitments through its committee structure and participatory and shared governance. This approach improves the alignment of financial and capital resources with academic priorities. Equal emphasis and focus are placed on measurement and assessment of resource utilization and adequacy of resources for their intended purposes.

Bergen has several groups and individuals involved in the assessment of student learning outcomes and academic and non-academic department performance. The Office of Curriculum serves as the point of origin for curriculum matters and works closely with the academic programs and departments to advance student learning outcomes. CIE promotes institutional policies, practices, and activities that enhance institutional effectiveness, that includes a focus on institutional research, strategic planning, and assessment. The CIE conducts two types of assessment which include Assessment of Student Learning (i.e., learning and program outcomes), and Administrative and Educational Support (AES) Assessment. The measurement and assessment of student learning outcomes focuses on evaluating the extent to which students have acquired and developed the knowledge, skills and competencies targeted through coursework and learning activities within program curriculums. AES Assessment focuses on the administrative departments and services provided to the Bergen community. The assessment process and results help to improve programs and services, enhance student learning, and impact the planning and allocation of resources. Academic and administrative departments have strategic plans, goals and priorities in sync with Bergen's vision and mission (Mission) [1] and strategic plans [2], [5], and related assessment plans.

Most academic programs have advisory committees composed of individuals from business and industry, secondary and other postsecondary institutions, workforce development boards, and other stakeholders. These committees are charged with the review and assessment of the caliber and quality of the programs they support. They help to identify the latest industry trends and needs that may lead to program changes and new teaching methodologies, which help ensure alignment between Bergen's academic programs and labor market needs.

From an AES assessment standpoint, administrative departments have strategic plans and annual goals that align with Bergen's vision, mission, and strategic plan, as discussed in detail in Criterion 1 of this standard. Assessment results for administrative departments are equally important as they are part of the individual goal setting and performance evaluation process. AES Assessment Reports [238] are used as guidelines for comprehensive assessment of services provided to the Bergen community, as they provide administrators with information about how services are viewed as well as required improvements. They also help administrators make informed decisions about resource allocation and the need to improve or expand services. As mentioned in Criterion 1 of this standard, the status and progress of the President's goals are assessed and reported annually to the BOT via the Presidential Goal Progress Report [230] and [231].

For a more detailed and further discussion on the assessment of academic learning outcomes, please see Standard V.



Criterion VI-9: Periodic Assessment of Planning, Resource Allocation and Renewal

In accordance with Bergen's current strategic plan, Focusing on the Future Strategic Plan 2024- 2029 [2], and Bergen's prior strategic plan, "Reimagine Bergen: 2018-2023 [5]," annual strategic goals and initiatives are integrated into both academic and AES unit assessments and program reviews. These evaluations, overseen by CIE, play a crucial role in refining programs and services, improving student learning outcomes, and guiding resource allocation (CIEWAs) [301]. The academic departments along with the AES units develop comprehensive assessment plans.

The assessment process and procedures are further discussed in Criterion 8 of this Standard and in Standard V.

As an added layer of assessment, the College is required to submit annual financial compliance reports to the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (NJ OSHE) [401]. These annual reports are assessed by the Secretary's office to determine potential financial challenges early in the cycle. The College has not received any warnings or follow-up enquiries from OSHE because of this financial accountability submission.

Standard VI Conclusion

The discussion and evidence offered in Standard VI confirms that Bergen complies with Standard VI and meets Requirements of Affiliation 10, 11, and 12. Bergen's core values provide a framework for effective programs and services. Through an ethic of care, students, faculty, staff, and the extended community, are well served by the College's sound fiscal management. To meet this challenge, Bergen remains vigilant in prioritizing and executing its mission and strategic plan. Bergen is cognizant that its success relies heavily on planning, using resources effectively, and improving student experience and operational success. These factors are central to the requirements and underlying core values espoused by Standard VI. The discussions and body of evidence presented in this standard are indicative of the College's commitment to student success, fiscal stability, and institutional effectiveness.

Bergen employs a budget process that is built in principle on ensuring that programs and services align with its mission, strategic plans, presidential goals, and assessment results. The College's ability to achieve positive results through progressive improvement in fiscal stability and long-term viability points to strong leadership at the County, BOT, and institutional levels. Although national and institutional trends in declining enrollment will pose future challenges, the College's focus on proactive assessment, fiscal performance, and prioritizing use of resources gives confidence that it is well positioned to remain good stewards for continuing institutional success.

Institutional Strengths

1. Bergen demonstrates a strong commitment to transparency and inclusiveness in its budgeting and financial planning process.
2. The College consistently creates a balanced budget each fiscal year notwithstanding national, state, and local financial pressures.

Institutional Opportunities

1. Bergen should continue to expand automation of the budget development and submission process to further transparency and simplify the planning process.
2. The College should develop an automated process to more effectively manage personnel costs, the largest expense category.



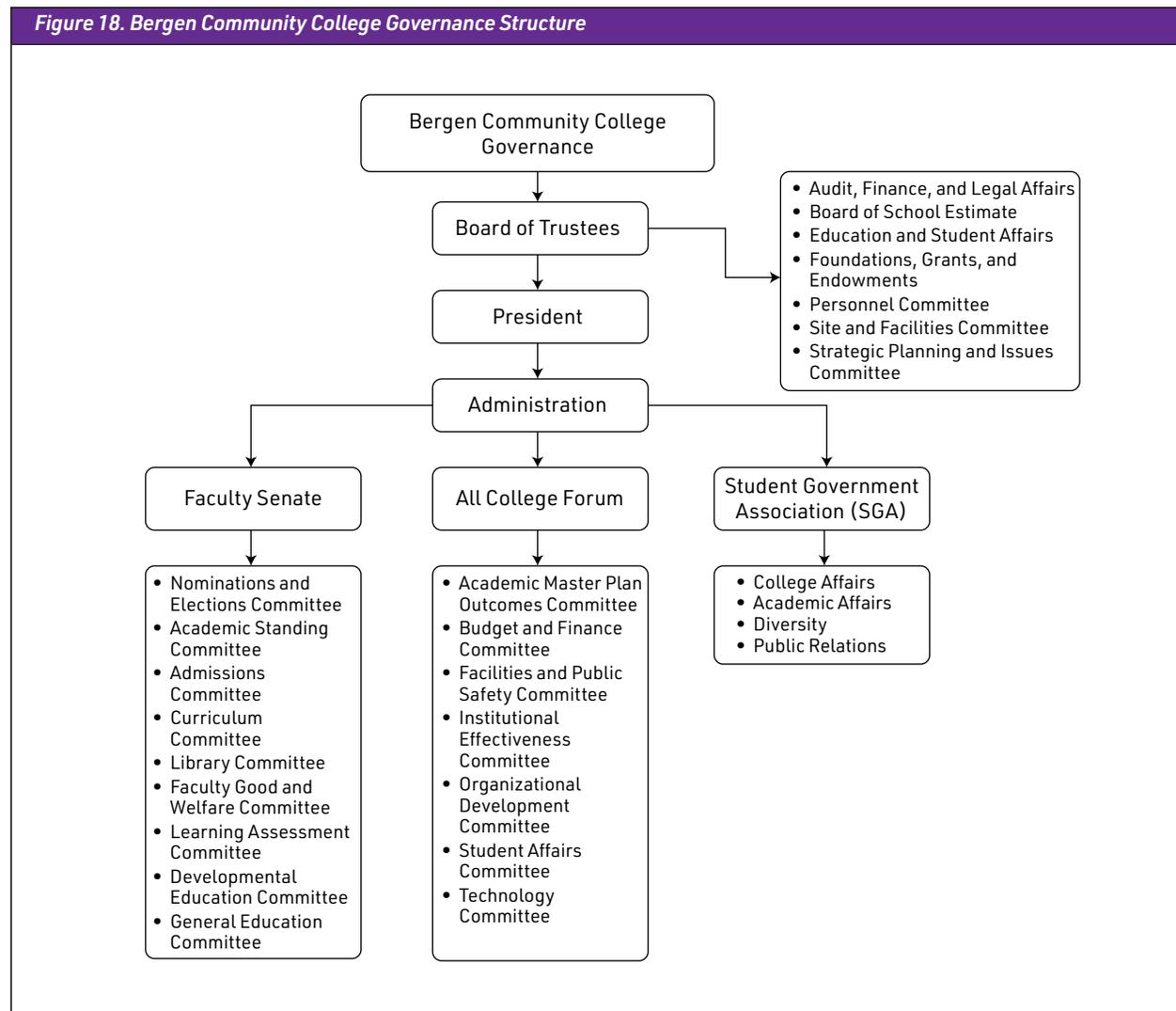
Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational systems, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

In an effort to maintain the highest level of integrity and remain accountable at every level, Bergen employs policies and procedures to assist in reaching its stated mission and goals. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, which encompassed a period of presidential transition, the college remained committed to its policies of shared governance that allowed for input from all college stakeholders in order to continue to best serve students and the greater community. This commitment to inclusive participation in the college’s governance has not only been maintained, but improved by the launch of the All College Forum alongside long-standing governing bodies such as the Faculty Senate and the SGA. With the emergence of a new centralized governing structure, the college, along with its BOT, reinforce its commitment to shared governing and its ability to assess the effectiveness of related processes.

Criterion VII-I: Governance Structures

Bergen maintains a clearly articulated and transparent participatory and shared governance structure that defines the roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision-making among its various constituencies, including the governing body, administration, faculty, staff, and students. This governance framework supports effective communication and collaborative decision-making, ensuring all voices within the College community have the opportunity to be heard.



Board of Trustees: Roles and Responsibilities: The BOT serves as the by-statute governing body responsible for the overall strategic direction, financial health, and establishes policy for the institution. The Board operates under a clearly defined set of bylaws (BOTBylaws) [74] that articulate its powers, duties, and responsibilities. Key functions of the Board include:

- **Oversight and Strategic Direction:** The Board ensures that the College’s mission, vision, and strategic goals are aligned with the needs of the community and the principles of higher education. This includes approving strategic plans, annual budgets, and major institutional policies.
- **Financial Stewardship:** The Board exercises fiduciary responsibility by overseeing the College’s financial affairs, including the approval of operating and capital budgets, financial audits, and investment strategies. It ensures that resources are allocated effectively to support the institution’s mission and goals.
- **Policy Development and Governance:** The Board defines its role as policy governance in collaboration with the College’s participatory and shared governance structure. Once policies have been developed, the BOT authorizes them to guide the administration and operation of the College. It collaborates closely with the President and other senior leaders to ensure that these policies are implemented effectively and align with the institution’s strategic priorities.
- **Leadership and Accountability:** The BOT is accountable for the selection, evaluation, and support of the President. It works collaboratively with the president to provide leadership and direction, while also holding the administration accountable for achieving strategic objectives and maintaining high standards of performance.

However, the Board delegates authority for the day-to-day management of the College to the President, who is charged with implementing BOT policies. This delegation allows the President and the administration to manage the institution’s operations effectively while adhering to the strategic framework and policies approved by the BOT.

BOT members fulfill their governance duties through participation in standing committees, each of which focuses on specific areas critical to the College’s operation and strategic priorities. The BOT meets regularly (BOTMeet) [405] to review and discuss matters related to the governance and administration of the College. These meetings provide a platform for robust dialogue and decision-making, ensuring that the Board is well-informed and engaged in the ongoing development of the institution. Board meeting dates, agendas, and minutes are appropriately announced in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, P.L. 1975, c.231 and with N.J.S.A. 10:4-18.

Administration: Bergen’s organizational and reporting structure is clearly documented in its organizational chart (OrgCh24) [153], which is accessible to all College employees through the College’s internal network and on the external-facing website. These charts provide a detailed outline of the reporting lines for all administrative staff, faculty, and other employees. Each position listed in the charts has a comprehensive job description, specifying the associated duties and requirements. The organizational charts are reviewed annually, updated as necessary through Personnel Committee resolutions, and shared with the BOT by the President.

The administrative staff consists of full-time administrators who work closely with the President to implement College policies and manage personnel effectively. The President holds weekly and biweekly one-on-one meetings with each member of the administrative team, collectively known as the Cabinet (Leadership) [237], to set priorities and gather essential operational information. This team includes the VPAA, VPSA, CFO, VPEA, Vice President of CE, Vice President of HR, Vice President of Facilities, CIE, and the Dean of RIE, each of whom reports directly to the President.

Additionally, the President conducts weekly meetings (PresCab24) [406] with the entire Cabinet and at times, the extended Cabinet and guest presenters, to review progress toward the College’s strategic goals, share and exchange critical information, ensure operational continuity, and facilitate both short- and long-term



strategic planning. Where appropriate, the insights and information from these meetings are then communicated to department heads and academic division leaders, as well as the members of the Management Team, who are responsible for further disseminating the information to their respective teams.

Faculty Senate: The Faculty Senate is a self-governing, representative body composed of the general faculty, as defined by its constitution (FSConst23) [20]. The Senate functions as a deliberative and advisory entity, making recommendations to the College administration on matters concerning instruction, academic programs, and student affairs. This role aligns with the Senate's commitment to shared governance, ensuring that faculty members actively contribute to the academic and operational decisions of the College.

Senate meetings provide a forum for faculty members to present their perspectives, debate academic issues, and participate in open discussions without prejudice. The Faculty Senate yearly meeting dates are posted each August (TuesSch) [407] and agendas, minutes, and curriculum documents are updated regularly on the Faculty Senate webpage. Faculty senators are expected to stay informed and regularly attend all meetings, where they engage in meaningful dialogue regarding the educational process and institutional policies. As specified in the Senate's bylaws, members are allowed absences for professional, personal, or business obligations, underscoring a balance between duty and flexibility.

The Faculty Senate elects its officers from among its membership to oversee its governance functions. The elected officers include a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Treasurer, and Secretary, each serving a one-year term, with the option for re-election. These officers are responsible for presiding over Senate meetings, maintaining communication with the administration, and representing faculty interests in the College's governance processes.

The membership of the Faculty Senate comprises a broad representation of the College community, including faculty members from various academic departments, the VPAA, a second vice president appointed by the President of the College, six elected faculty senators-at-large, the president and vice president of the SGA, and non-voting members such as the Associate Dean of Curriculum, Senate Course Auditor, and Senate Curriculum Auditor. This diverse composition ensures that all constituencies within the College are represented and have a voice in decision-making.

The governance structure of the Faculty Senate is supported by a network of standing committees, each dedicated to a specific area of academic and institutional importance. These standing committees include the Executive Committee, Academic Standing Committee, Curriculum Committee, Admissions Committee, Learning Assessment Committee, General Education Committee, Developmental Education Committee, and SSL Committee. Members of these committees are typically elected from the full-time faculty to serve two-year terms, underscoring the Senate's commitment to inclusivity and broad representation across all areas of College governance.

Through its well-defined governance framework and collaborative decision-making processes, the Faculty Senate plays a vital role in shaping the academic policies and operational strategies. It ensures that the faculty's perspective is integral to the College's mission, educational standards, and strategic planning, thereby reinforcing the institution's commitment to shared governance and academic excellence.

Student Government Association (SGA): The SGA serves as the official representative body of the student community, advocating student interests and facilitating engagement with faculty, staff, and administration to further the College's objectives. According to the SGA Constitution, the purpose of the SGA is "to function as a governing representative democracy on behalf of the student body, to cooperate with the College's governing bodies, and to ensure that student voices are heard in matters affecting their intellectual, social, and cultural welfare" (SGAConst) [26 Article I, Section 1.3].

The SGA is composed of several branches, including the Executive Board, Senate, Judiciary, and Student

Activities Board, each with distinct roles in governance and student engagement [26 Article I, Section 1.2]. Membership is open to all registered part-time and full-time students who meet the eligibility requirements, and all members have the right to participate in SGA meetings and vote in elections for senators and executive officers [26 Article III, Sections 3.1 and 3.2].

The SGA President plays a key role in forwarding the body's recommendations to College administration for further consideration. Additionally, representatives from the SGA serve as liaisons to other College governance bodies, including the Faculty Senate and the BOT, where they advocate student needs and perspectives (SGABylaws) [31 Article IX, Sections 1-3].

Through its democratic structure and active participation in shared governance, the SGA ensures that the student body is actively involved in shaping policies and practices, promoting a vibrant and engaged campus community. The SGA meets regularly with the administration (SGA101623m) [408] bringing projects and ideas forward for consideration from the student body (SGAProj23) [204].

All College Forum: Under the leadership of President Friedman, the College renewed its focus on participatory and shared governance, fostering collaboration among students, faculty, staff, administration, and the BOT. The ACF, launched in 2022 and formalized on November 21, 2023 (BOT112123) [409], serves as a structured governance body aligned with the College's vision, mission, values and goals. It engages diverse groups in transparent, collaborative decision-making. Co-chaired by presidential appointees with three-year terms, the ACF coordinates governance operations and committee activities, ensuring open communication and direct access to the President, who participates as an ex-officio member. Specialized committees focus on areas such as academics, student affairs, budget, institutional effectiveness, technology, and facilities (ACFComm) [240] and (ACFCommComp) [302]. The ACF complements and reinforces the work of established governance bodies, such as the Faculty Senate and the SGA by fostering a collaborative governance environment where all constituencies are actively engaged in decision-making (ACFAnnEx) [278].

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic and Governance Adaptations: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bergen adapted quickly to ensure operational and academic continuity. The BOT and President established a "Reopening Taskforce," led by a "Reopening Coordinator," with representation from management, faculty, staff, union leaders, and students (Reopen20) [319].

The task force created a data-driven "Reopening Plan" covering business operations, campus safety, and instructional continuity, supported by subcommittees focused on specific areas like health protocols and student services. Transparent updates were provided through emails, a web repository, and town halls (CommPlan20) [320]. The Reopening Coordinator oversaw implementation, ensured protocol compliance, and acted as the primary contact for inquiries and feedback.

Commitment to Transparent and Inclusive Governance: Through these comprehensive governance structures and adaptive processes, Bergen showcases its dedication to transparent decision-making, accountability, and inclusive participation, ensuring that all constituencies are actively engaged in the governance and leadership of the institution.

Criterion VII-2: Legally Constituted Governing Body

Board Responsibilities and Accountability: The BOT governs the College in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:64A-8, comprising 12 voting members. These include the Executive County Superintendent of Schools, eight members appointed by the County, two members appointed by the Governor, and one alumni student representative elected by the student body. The President of the College serves as an ex officio, non-voting member. One trustee of the Board serves as Chair and one as Vice Chair. There is also a Board Secretary and Treasurer. (NJSA 18A:64A-8) [303]; (NJSA 18A:64A-9) [304]; [74 p4]. As stated in the Board of Trustees Bylaws, "Board officers shall possess the rights and perform the duties prescribed by these bylaws; the parliamentary authority adopted by the Board; the rules and regulations promulgated by the Office of the



Secretary of Higher Education; and State law." [74 p4].

Each newly appointed or reappointed Board member, along with the newly elected student representative, is required to take an oath of office before participating in Board activities. The President serves on the Board from their swearing-in until their term as President concludes. The alumni student representative is elected to serve a one-year term, beginning at the first Board meeting in July following their class graduation. Similarly, the Executive County Superintendent of Schools serves from their swearing-in until their tenure as Superintendent ends.

Appointed members by the Governor and County serve from their swearing-in until their successors are duly appointed and qualified, as outlined in N.J.S.A. 18A:64A-9. The Board is responsible for reporting any matters affecting the College's interests to the Board, ensuring they remain informed and aligned with the College's mission and objectives.

Bergen is a public institution that operates autonomously and independently of the other 17 community colleges in the state of New Jersey. The NJCCC, created by state statute 18A:64A-26 in 1989, works with the leadership of trustees and presidents to strengthen and support New Jersey's network of community colleges to coordinate responsibilities as required by state law and coordinate statewide efforts to improve student opportunities and student success outcomes.

In accordance with the state law, Bergen's BOT follows a set of by-laws to establish its fiduciary responsibilities through policy governing the College and audits (NJ9A:1) [154]; [74]; (FinAud23)[291]. The Board is responsible for the operation of the College but shall delegate to the President of the College responsibility for the administration of the College under the authority established by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. The Board also approves all College policies and has established committees including Audit, Finance, and Legal Affairs; Education and Student Affairs; Foundations, Grants, and Endowments; Personnel Committee; Site and Facilities Committee; and Strategic Planning and Issues Committee.

Other advisory structures with Board members liaisons are the Board of Commissioners and the NJCCC to advise the Board on conducting its business. The Board, in collaboration with the College's administration, also establishes and approves annual student tuition, College admission criteria, graduation requirements and organizational structure.

Advisory Committees may be established after the Annual Organizational Meeting for each program area as defined in the College catalog. These committees shall be composed of industry experts appointed by the Chairperson after consultation with the President, and with the advice and consent of the Board. Each committee shall have a chairperson, designated by the Board Chairperson. Members of the Committees shall serve without compensation. It shall be the duty of the Advisory Committees to assist in the development and evaluation of each program area.

The BOT prioritizes clear, transparent communication and dialogue with all members of the College community and members of the county. The Board's annual meeting schedule is posted on the College's website. Monthly board meetings are open to the public and always contain a public session where attendees can speak on issues and concerns and provide participatory input. The minutes of each Board meeting are recorded and posted on the College's website shortly after each meeting and archived for the public to easily access. Additionally, the public sessions of all Board meetings are filmed and available for viewing via the College's website and YouTube channel.

The BOT ensures that Bergen clearly states and fulfills its mission and goals. For example, the Board engaged with the President and Cabinet to provide guidance to the strategic planning process. Board members attended meetings on the College's strategic plan with the President and VPAA and have opportunities to

provide key input into the planning. The board also approves the College strategic plan and receives regular updates on how the plan is being implemented (Strategic24) [2].

Board Independence and Expertise: Bergen’s BOT has the independence and expertise to ensure the integrity of the College. Member profiles indicate the professional background of each trustee, showing their depth of knowledge and extensive experience (BOTLead) [305]. The trustees possess expertise that is highly relevant to governing the College in the following areas: education, finance, strategic planning, public relations, facilities, social services, and criminal justice. At the outset of service, each Trustee is sworn in under the Oath of Office (BOTOath) [75]. As articulated in the Board’s Code of Ethics policy, “Within thirty (30) days after the organizational meeting of the Board, each trustee shall file with the secretary of the Board, a form of statement specified by the Board which discloses the nature of any financial interest or business relationship, which the trustee has which relates to the College, or which the trustee is otherwise required to disclose under this Code of Ethics. (BOTEth) [76]. Trustees are also required to sign a confidentiality agreement that includes non-disclosure of proprietary or privileged information pertaining to the College (BOTND) [80].

Board members, upon beginning their term, participate in an orientation. As part of this orientation, Board members receive training from both the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), and the NJCCC, which provide various resources and conference opportunities (BOTLA) [306]. New board members also meet with the President and Board Chairperson to discuss their role and committee assignments along with receiving a tour of the College and an information packet. They receive the Oath of Office by legal counsel.

Non-Interference: The College’s BOT, through its bylaws in Section I, Article 2.a. [74], recognizes that the College’s President has autonomy in meeting his responsibilities and managing the day-to-day operations of the College. While the Board is not actively involved in the daily operations, board members work alongside the president and his Cabinet members on various committees that are key to the College’s well-being. Dialogue between the president, his Cabinet, and the Board is essential for the Board to serve as well-informed advocates of the College in the greater community.

Policy Oversight: A central function of the BOT is to authorize College policies, through the work of its committees [74 p4]. Each committee is chaired by a Board member. The Board also establishes ad hoc committees when the need arises.

- The Board’s Audit, Finance and Legal Affairs Committee is responsible for monitoring and providing oversight of Bergen’s fiscal activities and financial management.
- The Education and Student Affairs Committee reviews and monitors proposed curricula and other educational endeavors, including but not limited to grant applications. The Committee also oversees non-academic areas of student life, including services and activities that provide support for a diverse student population.
- The Strategic Planning and Issues Committee oversees the development and implementation of strategic long-range plans for the College, fosters cooperative relationships with the community, and monitors and serves in an advocacy role for legislation concerning community colleges.
- The Personnel Committee approves all personnel actions including hiring, terminations, and retirements of full-time employees. It reviews all official College policies, guidelines and programs concerning or affecting affirmative action.
- The Site and Facilities Committee oversees all construction and renovation projects and the maintenance and management of the College’s physical plant and sites.
- The Foundation, Grants and Endowments Committee interfaces with the Bergen Community College Foundation.

Financial Oversight: The Board’s Audit, Finance, and Legal Affairs Committee plays a critical role in ensuring the overall financial health of the College. Current members include a Certified Public Accountant (C.P.A.), the Bergen Executive County Superintendent of Schools, the Superintendent of the Fairview School district,



legal counsel, and the Board Chair who serves as ex-officio member of each committee.

The Board’s Audit and Finance Committee currently meets 10 times yearly to discuss matters relating to the College’s operations and finances. The primary functions of the Audit and Finance Committee noted below demonstrate how the Board fulfills its fiduciary responsibility (AuFinMin) [310], [291].

- Provide oversight and guidance on financial and legal matters related to the operation of the College.
- Review financial reports for College operations, including, for example, investments, expenditures over \$10,000, cash position, enrollment, legal activities and related expenses, and others (examples of these reports are included in the document inventory and on the College’s website under the Board of Trustees section).
- Provide oversight and guidance on drafting, reviewing, and presenting the College’s annual capital and operating budget request to the Bergen County Board of School Estimate for approval.
- Review and provide guidance on the College’s final capital and operating budgets, including setting tuition and fees, and recommending to the full Board of Trustees for approval.
- Review and approve planned expenditures that are above the statutory bid threshold.
- Review and provide guidance on financial policies and procedures.
- Review of the annual audit report and discuss results with the audit team and leadership as needed.
- The Audit, Finance, and Legal Affairs Committee receives a presentation from the college’s external auditor on their report and any findings related to the college’s financial statements if applicable.

Presidential Appointment and Evaluation: The BOT leads the hiring process of the College’s President and is guided by the College policy “*Presidential Searches: Policy and Procedures*” (PresSear) [307]. These procedures allow for the selection of a Chief Executive Officer who has the necessary credentials and experience to lead the College in the pursuit of its mission. The search process involves the formation of a search committee with broad representation of the college, along with a timeline, and a process for recommending candidates to the Board.

The Board evaluates the President’s performance annually through a process that is outlined in the Bergen Community College President’s Evaluation Timeline (PresEvTi) [311]. As outlined in the timeline, each year the President drafts annual goals in the spring, submits them to the Board for their approval in June and then provides status updates on the goals’ progress in October. The Board then begins their evaluation process in November and discusses the President’s performance and possible salary adjustments. The process is then completed in December (PresSal) [410].

Principled and Knowledgeable Board: Bergen’s BOT is informed in its operations and adopts best practices for board governance, professional development opportunities, and training for new and existing trustees (FerraraInt022724) [411].

New trustees are encouraged to take part in programming and professional development opportunities provided by ACCT that includes educational opportunities, tools, and resources, including two annual national conferences, the ACCT Leadership conference and the Community College National Legislative Summit. Trustees also receive the magazine *Trustee Quarterly* and the *ACCT Advisor*. Multiple new trustees in recent years have taken part in this programming. Trustees also participate in annual retreats with agenda items related to ongoing trustee education and principled leadership (BOTRet22) [412]. New trustees are also encouraged to take part in programming provided by the NJCCC. The council offers a two-night *Virtual Trustee Leadership Academy*, in partnership with the ACCT, which covers topics such as the board and its governing functions, best practices of effective boards and building strong relationships between the president and the board.

Avoids Conflict of Interest: The BOT members’ Oath of Office includes a statement about performing duties impartially [75]. BOT members must adhere to the “Code of Ethics for the Board of Trustees” that addresses conflicts of interest [76]. It specifically states that Board members shall not have financial or other interests or

activities that conflict with their College trustee duties. Trustees are required to disclose any potential conflict of interest involving the trustee or a member of the trustee's immediate family. The Board of Trustees Code of Ethics complies with New Jersey Conflicts of Interest Law and the Uniform Ethics Code (NJEthCode) [308], (NJEthCom) [309].

Board members also sign a "Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality Agreement" that ensures trustees' fulfillment of fiduciary obligations to the College and non-disclosure of confidential information [80]. The Board of Trustees Bylaws address conflicts of interest. A trustee is not permitted to vote on any matter in which they may have a direct, indirect, personal, or financial interest [74 p7].

Supports Leadership Autonomy: The College is independently governed by its own BOT who support the College President in maintaining the autonomy of the institution and in carrying out its mission. The Board sets the policies, and the College President serves as the chief executive of the institution.

Criterion VII-3: Chief Executive Officer

Appointment and Evaluation: Bergen follows the guidelines set forth in the policy, Presidential Searches Policy and Procedures and state law [154]. It is the role of the presidential search committee to "recommend three to five candidates, in unranked alphabetical order to the BOT for its selection of the President of Bergen Community College." These procedures have been in effect since December 6, 2006, and were strictly followed during the search process for the College's current President.

The BOT evaluates the President of the College on a yearly basis [311]. The evaluation's purpose is to assess the President's performance and progress toward annual goals (Presidential24) [3] and (PresGHist) [229]. Additional information about the evaluation of the President is included in Standard VII, Criterion 1 (f).

In accordance with the Article 4: Membership of the BOT Bylaws [74 p7], the President of the College shall serve as an ex-officio non-voting member. The College's organizational chart documents that the College President reports to the BOT [153 p1].

Credentials and Experience: To ensure that the Chief Executive Officer has the appropriate credentials and experience to fulfill the mission of the College, the College follows the guidelines set forth by the job description for the position of President. It is the responsibility of the Board to develop a detailed job description including the responsibilities and duties expected of the President, as well as qualifications the Board will use in the recruitment, screening and selection processes (PresJobD) [312].

Dr. Eric M. Friedman has served as President since 2021 and is appropriately qualified for the position of President of Bergen Community College. Dr. Friedman is leading the implementation of the college's new Strategic Plan 2024-2029, the roadmap by which Bergen will reach its mission. Dr. Friedman has appropriate credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the College as evidenced by his resume (ResumeEF) [413].

Authority and Autonomy: The College's President has the authority to lead the College with autonomy in the pursuit of strategically achieving its mission and goals. The President leads the College in developing strategic initiatives, staffing, planning, budgeting and oversees the College's daily operations (Mission) [1]. See (FriedmanInt031124) [313] for examples of how the College President fulfills his responsibilities.

Assistance of Qualified Administrators: The President is supported by a team of qualified administrators including six vice presidents, a Dean of RIE, the CFO, and the CIO [153 p2]. All job descriptions for administrative positions outline the necessary credentials and leadership experience a candidate must possess. The search process the College employs only accepts qualified candidates and search committees are made up of members from throughout the College community. These committees recommend the strongest candidates with the best qualifications and credentials for the role to move forward in the search.



Finalists for executive-level positions progress to a second-tier interview phase, which may include various activities such as presentations to the campus community, interviews with the Cabinet, one-on-one meetings with the President, and other evaluative processes (VPHRInt) [414]. When necessary, the College may also partner with an executive search firm to attract and recruit highly qualified candidates (ACCTCDO) [415]. Administrators in the President’s Cabinet are engaged in continual professional development to maintain a current knowledge of their discipline to best serve the College’s mission and goals.

Criterion VII-4: College Administration

Organizational Structure: The organizational chart clearly delineates the reporting lines within the administrative framework of the College and each administrative unit [153]. This structure outlines the roles, responsibilities, and reporting hierarchy, ensuring efficient and effective operation of the College.

Qualified Administration: The President’s Cabinet members come to the College with significant expertise and credentials in their respective disciplines, bringing years of experience with them from within Bergen, and/or from previous leadership experience at other institutions (LeadBios) [416].

Credentialed, Experienced, and Supported Administration: Vice president positions at the College require a minimum of a Master’s degree from an accredited institution along with a minimum of seven years of relevant administrative experience with progressively increasing leadership responsibilities. All positions for administrative roles in the Cabinet have job descriptions that outline the role’s minimum qualifications and experience, job duties and responsibilities and place in the organizational structure. All members of the administration have come to the College with the appropriate qualifications and credentials with ample experience in their respective fields [416].

The college’s administration utilizes technological resources and information systems to perform the necessary duties for their positions. The administration also strives to employ increasingly sophisticated technological tools to further improve both workflow and communications. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the College began to employ technological tools such as videoconferencing and HyFlex meeting options to continue to maintain fluid communications and the shared governance process. ITS also created an assistant vice president position as their role and services have expanded in recent years to improve the College’s communications, internal processes and record keeping (ITReorg) [314].

Campus Engagement: The College’s administration actively fosters transparent communication with faculty, staff, and students to advance the college’s mission. This engagement occurs regularly throughout the year through various in-person and virtual channels including PACDEI, “Town Hall” open forums, “Pizza with the President” sessions, the ACF, the annual Day of Development, Faculty Conference, adjunct faculty conferences, faculty senate participation, student government association collaboration, Center for Institutional Effectiveness meetings, Management Team meetings, and regular administrative meetings.

Administrative Unit Assessment and Evaluation: Bergen maintains a robust and systematic process for regularly reviewing and assessing its organizational structure and effectiveness in alignment with the college’s strategic goals. The Cabinet, in collaboration with the VP of HR and the CFO, conducts comprehensive reviews of roles, responsibilities, and organizational design within their respective units. This review process focuses on enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness through evidence-based assessments. A recent example is the advising redesign (AdvReD) [223].

Each member of the Cabinet is actively involved in evaluating the performance of their unit, utilizing assessment data to make informed decisions regarding hiring, restructuring, reclassifying, or eliminating positions (NonAAAssess) [238]; (PRAssess22) [418]; and (SSAssess23) [419]. This ongoing assessment is part of a broader commitment to continuous improvement and alignment with the college’s strategic plan. Additional examples of recent administrative restructuring based on these assessments include:

- **Inclusion of the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness in the President’s Cabinet:** Previously reporting to the

Vice President of Academic Affairs, this change reflects a heightened focus on institutional assessment and effectiveness.

- **Creation of the Vice President of External Affairs position:** This role was established to better coordinate and advance the college's external relations and partnerships.
- **Reorganization of six of the College's nine divisions:** The restructuring affected the Student Affairs, Human Resources, Information Technology, Facilities, External Affairs, and Institutional Research divisions to streamline operations and improve service.

Bergen's commitment to a transparent and comprehensive planning and assessment process is evident in the engagement of all departments and units, ensuring alignment with institutional goals. Further details of these processes are outlined in Standards IV, V, and VI.

Criterion VII-5: Governance, Leadership, and Administrative Assessment

Shared Governance Self-Assessment: Bergen employs several mechanisms to evaluate and enhance its participatory and shared governance processes:

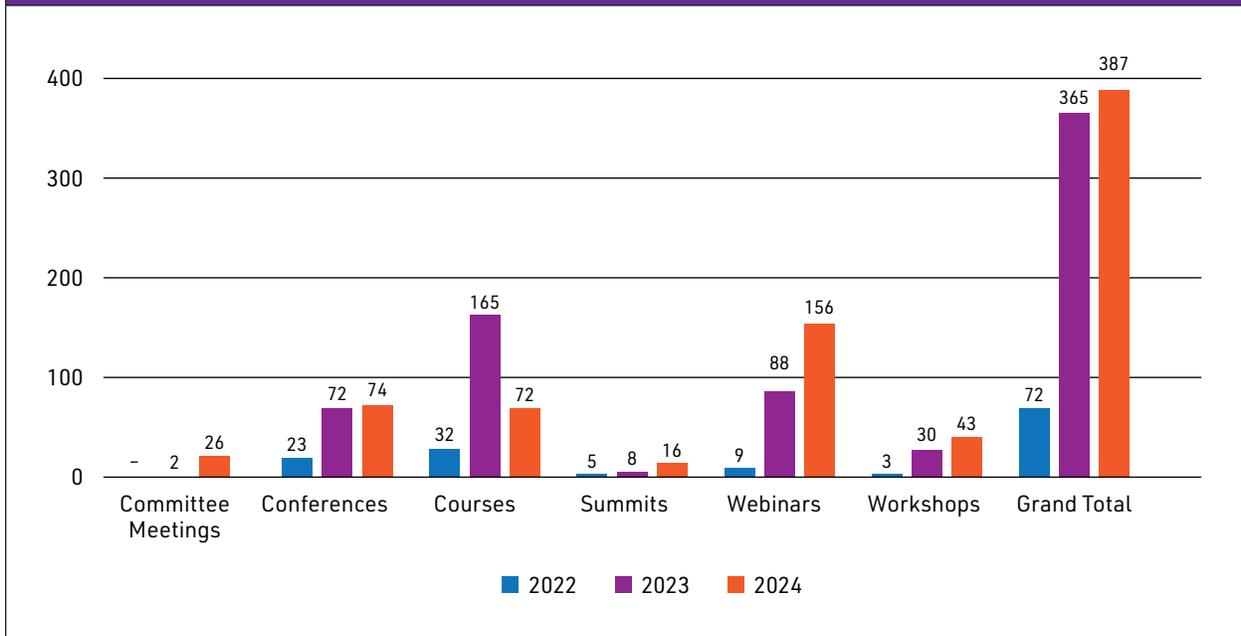
- 1. All College Forum:** The ACF actively seeks feedback from the College community by regularly displaying the co-chairs' contact information at the end of each meeting, encouraging participants to share questions, concerns, and suggestions. Each meeting also includes a dedicated question and answer segment, allowing for open dialogue and feedback.
- 2. Faculty Senate:** The Faculty Senate holds monthly meetings open to the entire College community, inviting input on issues to be addressed. The Senate leadership meets monthly with the College's President and vice presidents of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to collaborate on addressing concerns and shaping policy. The leadership team also regularly reviews their effectiveness in their role as the faculty's representative body, discussing strategies to improve their governance contributions.
- 3. Student Government Association (SGA):** The SGA's executive board maintains regular communication with its members and advisors, holding meetings that are open to the College community. The SGA actively solicits student input on various issues and conducts surveys to ensure they are effectively representing student interests. Regular reports are presented to both the President and the Board of Trustees to keep them informed of student perspectives and initiatives.

Board of Trustees Self-Assessment: The BOT conducts an annual self-evaluation during their retreat to assess their effectiveness in governance. This self-evaluation includes a reflection on their teamwork and overall performance in supporting the College's mission (BOTSelfE) [315]. For example, in 2023, the trustees identified the need for improved information sharing between committees and enhanced team-building efforts. They also proposed new initiatives to better support the College's objectives (BOTSelfInf) [316]. Additionally, the Board regularly updates its bylaws and Code of Ethics to align with best practices.

President's Cabinet Self-Assessment: Each member of the President's Cabinet undergoes an annual performance review to evaluate their effectiveness in meeting the College's strategic goals. Cabinet members set annual objectives aligned with the President's goals and participate in regular performance review meetings with the President (FinPlan) [317]; (FacGoal) [318]. They also develop individual assessment plans to evaluate the effectiveness of their units. Periodic retreats for the President and Cabinet members provide an additional forum for strategic assessment and planning.

Staff Development and Retention Efforts: In January 2024, The BOT extended President Friedman's contract for an additional five years. Throughout his tenure, he has prioritized building a highly qualified, high-performing, cohesive leadership team (see the evidence store for resumes and bios on the leadership team). President Friedman is well respected by both the college and local communities and has developed strong working relationships with Bergen's BOT and the County of Bergen leadership. To enhance the professional capabilities of our labor force, Bergen has increased its investments in professional development for all employees (see Figure 19: Data on Bergen's Professional Development Activities (2022-2024)). These investments are directly attributed to building the skills and knowledge of our faculty and staff, improving

Figure 19. Data on Bergen's Professional Development Activities (2022-2024)



employee satisfaction and retention, and enhancing student experience. Furthermore, the college is making efforts to assess departmental structures and upgrade titles and job descriptions to meet current needs. For example, the job description and title were updated for the VP of Human Resources position to VP of Human Resources and Organizational Development to reflect a strategic emphasis on employee development. The college has also invested in higher-level second-tier leadership positions such as the AVP of Financial Aid, AVP of Public Safety, and the AVP of Information Technology. These changes provide a pathway for junior managers and allow for succession planning efforts.

Standard VII Conclusion

Bergen complies with Standard VII and meets Requirements of Affiliation 12 and 13. The College maintains a well-defined participatory and shared governance structure, as evidenced by the establishment of various bodies that ensure a voice for the entire College community. Policies such as the Code of Ethics, Non-Disclosure Confidentiality Agreement, Oath of Office, and Financial Disclosure Statement underscore the importance of ethical governance and integrity, reinforcing the college's commitment to avoiding conflicts of interest and upholding high standards of leadership and accountability.

Institutional Strengths

1. The College demonstrates a strong commitment to participatory and shared governance, ensuring transparency, accountability, and active participation from all segments of the College community.
2. The establishment of the ACF has significantly enhanced the College's governance model by centralizing diverse constituencies and broadening participation in decision-making processes.
3. The BOT remains deeply committed to supporting the College's mission, goals, and strategic plan, while also contributing positively to the campus community through active involvement in key initiatives and events.
4. The President has expanded opportunities for open dialogue and improved communication channels through public venues and participatory forums.

5. The President's Cabinet plays a pivotal role in leading and participating in forums, committees, and other venues that promote collaboration among faculty, staff, and students.

Institutional Opportunities

1. The College should continue developing the newly established participatory and shared governance structure of the ACF while maintaining a continuous feedback loop that ensures alignment with the Faculty Senate and the SGA.
2. To continue fostering a culture of collegial collaboration and continuous self-improvement, the College would benefit from periodically surveying members of governance bodies to assess the effectiveness and climate of governance on campus.



